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THE REAL SHELLEY.

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VOL. II

Sept 10

AN

Jan 21

THE REAL SHELLEY.

NEW VIEWS OF THE POET'S LIFE.

BY

JOHN CORDY JEAFFRESON,

AUTHOR OF

‘THE REAL LORD BYRON,’ ‘A BOOK ABOUT DOCTORS,’

‘A BOOK ABOUT LAWYERS,’

&c. &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

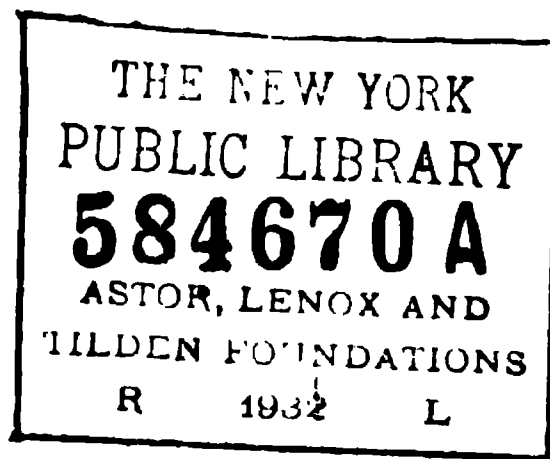
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THE REAL SHELLEY.

CHAPTER I.

WILLIAM GODWIN.

Mr. Kegan Paul's Inaccuracies—Godwin's Early Story—From Socinianism to Deism—In the Service of Publishers—Hack-Work—*Political Justice*—*Caleb Williams*—Temperance and Frugality—Godwin's two imprudent Marriages—His consequent Impoverishment—His personal Appearance—His Speech and Manner—His morbid Vanity—His Sensitiveness for his Dignity—His Benevolence and Honesty—Good Husband and good Father—Looking out for a suitable Young Woman—Mary Wollstonecraft—Godwin's Regard for her—Mary in Heaven—A Blighted Being.

To guard against imputations of error, that may be unjustly preferred against this work on the authority of another man of letters, it is needful for me to call attention to certain inaccuracies of Mr. Kegan Paul's chief literary performance. In Chapter VII., Vol. II., of *William Godwin; his Friends and Contemporaries*, Mr. Kegan Paul remarks, 'The attraction which Godwin's society always possessed for young men has often been noticed, nor did it decrease as years passed on. Two young men were drawn to him in the year 1811, fired with zeal for intellectual pursuits, and desiring help from Godwin. They were different in their circumstances, but were both unhappy, and both died young. The first was a lad named Patrickson, the second Percy Bysshe Shelley.' In this characteristic sentence, Mr. Kegan Paul makes at least three blunders. As Patrickson was corresponding with William Godwin in December, 1810, the youth was drawn to the man of letters before 1811. As Shelley never saw William Godwin, never wrote him a line, before 1812 (though Mr. Denis Florence MacCarthy states otherwise, on the strength of a misread passage of one of the Oxonian Shelley's epistles), he certainly did not make Godwin's

acquaintance in 1811. As he was corresponding with him for many months before he set eyes on him, Shelley was not in the first instance drawn to the author of *Political Justice* by his social charms. It is characteristic of Mr. Kegan Paul that the page on which he declares Patrickson to have made Godwin's acquaintance, no earlier than 1811, faces the very page that exhibits the greater part of a letter from the man of letters to his ill-fated *protégé*, dated 'Skinner Street, London, December 18th, 1810.'

At the opening of the next chapter of his book of blunders, Mr. Kegan Paul holds stoutly to his statement that Shelley and Godwin were in correspondence twelve months before they exchanged letters. Instead of being headed '1812-14,' as it would have been, had it not been for this droll misconception, Chapter VIII., Vol. II., of the book is headed 'The Shelleys, 1811-14,' and opens with a short paragraph containing these words, 'The first notice of Shelley in the Godwin Diaries is under date January 6th, 1811, "Write to Shelley."' To heighten the confusion, for which I am slow to think Godwin's diary in any degree accountable, the biographer says in his next paragraph, 'Shelley was at this time living at Keswick, in the earlier and happier days of his marriage with Harriet Westbrook. He had already, in this manner, made the acquaintance of Leigh Hunt, when, in January, 1811, he wrote thus to Godwin':—the letter thus submitted to the reader's notice being Shelley's well-known first letter to Godwin, which appears in Hogg's *Life* under the right date, 'January 3rd, 1812,' but in Mr. Kegan Paul's medley of mistakes under the wrong date of 'January 3rd, 1811.' As Shelley's first letter to Leigh Hunt was dated 2nd March, 1811, it was not written before 3rd January, 1811. As Leigh Hunt took no notice of that letter, Shelley did not make Leigh Hunt's acquaintance by writing it. Though Leigh Hunt saw and spoke with Shelley on one or two occasions of earlier time, he cannot be fairly said to have made his acquaintance before a day long subsequent to 3rd February, 1815.

What an assemblage of errors in half-a-page of print! It is conceivable that the usually careful Godwin in his diary gave the wrong number to the new year,—a mistake made occasionally even by precise journalists. But if it was so, instead of being misled by the slip into a series of bad blunders,

Mr. Kegan Paul should have detected and amended it. Here is the list of blunders :—

Blunder No. 1.—A wrong date of 1811 for 1812 at the head of the chapter.

Blunder No. 2.—The same wrong date to the extract from the diary.

Blunder No. 3.—The same wrong date in the author's original writing.

Blunder No. 4.—The same error in the date given to the letter.

Blunder No. 5.—The biographer's own mistake of saying that Shelley was living at Keswick in January, 1811,—months before his expulsion from Oxford.

Blunder No. 6.—The biographer's own mistake of saying that Shelley and Harriett Westbrook were husband and wife on 3rd January, 1811,—eight calendar months before the date of their wedding.

Blunder No. 7.—The biographer's own mistake of saying Shelley's first letter to Leigh Hunt was dated before 3rd January, 1811.

Blunder No. 8.—The biographer's own mistake of saying Shelley made Leigh Hunt's acquaintance by writing that letter.

Blunder No. 9.—The biographer's own mistake (of years), touching the date when Shelley made Leigh Hunt's acquaintance.

Nine errors of fact in half-a-page of light print by a gentleman who has put himself before the world as an authority on matters of Shelleyan story, and who in doing so has done not a little for the obscuration of the record. Mr. Kegan Paul is one of those accurate writers, from whom Mr. Froude has warned me not to differ. In due course something more will be said of Mr. Kegan Paul's services to Shelleyan research, but for the moment readers are invited to give their attention to a more notable man of letters.

Born at Wisbech, Co. Cambridge, on 3rd March, 1756, William Godwin was in his fifty-sixth year when he received Shelley's letter of entreaty for sympathy and guidance. The son of a Dissenting minister, who never rose to any eminence or a higher stipend than 60*l.* a-year in his vocation, William Godwin was reared amongst people of lowly fortune and rude manners, in the eastern counties, receiving in his boyhood, from teachers of no singular efficiency, an education neither greatly

better nor greatly worse than the training ordinarily given to English boys of his social degree in the later half of the last century. On escaping from these schoolmasters, one of whom he had served in the capacity of an usher, the future man of letters went to the Hoxton College in order to qualify himself for his father's calling; and on leaving that seminary he officiated for a few years as a Non-conforming minister, preaching and otherwise labouring in a way of life for which he soon discovered his unfitness, first at Ware in Hertfordshire, then at Stowmarket in Suffolk, and then at Beaconsfield, Co. Bucks. A volume of sermons, published some while after their delivery to rural congregations, still remains in evidence that if Godwin in his days of irregular reverence was as good a preacher as the average Non-conforming 'pulpiteers' of his period, Dissenters were edified in George the Third's earlier time with worse sermons than is generally supposed.

Ere long the young minister discovered that he could not believe what he was bound to teach. That from manhood's threshold he was more than slightly disposed to religious scepticism is shown by the curious disputation he held on paper, during his last year at Hoxton, with a fellow-student, the question of the strictly private and confidential controversy being the existence of the Deity. Could he have proved to his satisfaction the existence of the Almighty, Godwin conceived he would be troubled by no doubt of the truth of Christianity, nor by any disposition to quarrel with the refinements of Calvinistic doctrine. Under these circumstances Godwin took the negative side in the secret controversy, hoping that his arguments would be demolished and his faith settled by his fellow-collegian. The result of the conflict does not appear. Possibly the paper war satisfied the doubter that he could conscientiously enter the ministry. If so, it only suppressed for a period the doubts that determined Godwin a few years later to seek another means of livelihood. At Beaconsfield (1783) he was converted to Socinianism by Priestley's *Institutes*. Five years later he had passed through Socinianism into Deism.

On becoming a Unitarian he took the ordinary course of a young man who, too poor to live in idleness, and too honest to live by daily falsehood, possesses studious tastes and literary aptitude. Coming to London he sought employment of the publishers, and contrived to live hardly, painfully, temperately,

as a book-maker and publisher's hack, whilst he persisted in the labours of a student. Producing in his twenty-eighth year a *Life of Lord Chatham*, for which he got nothing, and the *Defence of the Rockingham Party*, for which Stockdale paid him five guineas, he went on reading strenuously and writing as he best could,—throwing off articles for the *English Review* at two guineas a-sheet, turning out forgotten novels for which he was paid from five to twenty guineas, translating for Murray the French MS. *Memoirs of Simon Lord Lovat*; doing whatever work came to hand, till he was appointed at sixty guineas per annum to write the historical part of Robinson's *New Annual Register*, and to contribute articles to the *Political Herald*,—two engagements that, coming to him in his thirtieth year, gave him at the same time a sense of success and a sense of financial security.

The poverty and hardship, in which he had been trained from childhood till he dropt the title of 'Reverend' and determined to live honestly by the pen instead of living dishonestly by the pulpit, were serviceable to the booksellers' hack, whom they had taught how to live with comfort and contentment on a precarious number of weekly shillings. The young man, who dined sufficiently well on a chop and potato, and conceived himself to have dined luxuriously after consuming a large beefsteak and a pint of porter, had in some respects the advantage of literary competitors, who together with higher culture had acquired at Oxford or Cambridge a taste for higher living. On approaching middle life he could, however, have afforded to relinquish the frugal habits formed during his early struggles. The persevering hack, who steadily prosecuted various studies whilst toiling for the publishers; the religious inquirer, who passed through Socinianism on his way from Calvinism to Deism; the resolute Radical, who sought the justification of his political sentiments in philosophical principles, whilst living in close friendship with Thomas Holcroft, and cordial good fellowship with Thomas Paine, was a man, certain to achieve eminence sooner or later in the republic of letters. If it came to him less than soon, celebrity came to Godwin none too late for its perfect enjoyment. He was still in his thirty-eighth year, when he published *Political Justice*,—the work for which Robinson is said to have paid him, at different times, sums amounting to a thousand guineas; the work that made him famous as a teacher

of philosophical Radicalism. If it made him the best-abused man of the three kingdoms, this daring and in some respects superlatively unsound book rendered him the idol of political enthusiasts in every quarter of the country. Unalluring in design, repellent in style, usually guarded in expression, sold at a price that kept it from the hands of the multitude whom it was intended chiefly to benefit, the frigid and passionless work, whose principles could not fail to make it regarded with disfavour by the majority of the wealthier class, possessed no feature or quality, apart from its attractive title, its aims and its general audacity, to humour the popular taste and win popular applause. For such a work shrewd judges of the book-market might well have predicted commercial failure. It was, however, successful from every point of view. Successful for its immediate and later effect on the readers it was especially intended to influence, it was fortunate in a sale that exceeded the anticipations of author and publisher, and fortunate in the determination of the Government to take no measures to check its circulation.

Published in 1793, *Political Justice* was still rising in public esteem, when Godwin produced (in May 1794) *Caleb Williams*; a novel that was largely indebted for its singular popularity to the influence of the political treatise. The books may be said to have run together, and united in placing their author amongst the most famous writers of his generation,—the success of the novel stimulating the success of the scientific study, whilst admiration of the philosopher's reasonings quickened the interest in his work of fancy. Whilst readers hastened eagerly from the tale of terror to the work of unemotional demonstration, others passed with curiosity from the volumes of the political philosopher to the pages of the enthralling story. In the annals of English letters there is no other case of an author, achieving almost at the same moment so sensational a celebrity in two such different departments of literary enterprise.

In the days when *Political Justice* and *Caleb Williams* were new literature, eminently successful authors derived less emolument from their most popular writings, than comes now-a-days to authors of inferior merit from works of only average popularity. But putting him in pecuniary ease for the moment, Godwin's double triumph (though he sold the novel for a curiously small sum) placed him in a position that, to a man

of his industry and frugal habits, was a promise of security from financial discomfort, so long as he retained his power of working, and persisted in the ways of prudence. That he was not likely to fall into poverty through self-indulgence appeared from his way of living when fortune smiled upon him. Remaining in the little house in Somers Town, where his yearly expenditure never exceeded 130*l.*, he showed no disposition either for the pleasures of luxury or the pleasures of ostentation.

How came it that the man of letters, so averse to every kind of prodigality, dropt in a few years into the very troubles from which his industry and temperance seemed certain to preserve him, and, after falling into poverty in life's middle term, whilst the productions of his pen were still fairly remunerative, passed the long remainder of his laborious years in one, vain humiliating conflict with financial embarrassment? The answer is that, with every good reason for persisting in celibacy, and no single sound excuse for surrendering the advantages of singleness, he made two imprudent marriages,—the second of which was only a few degrees less imprudent and unfortunate than the earlier alliance with Mary Wollstonecraft. In other than financial respects Godwin suffered severely from these unions. It might almost be thought that the divine powers, who have been assumed to concern themselves especially with the affairs of lovers, determined to punish the arch-maligner of lawful matrimony, by luring him into the estate he had decried, and then rendering him a signal example of some of the evils that may ensue from wedlock. It is strange that the man, who in celibatic freedom spoke so hardly of marriage, endured in later time so much from the honourable estate he had warned others to avoid. Strange also that, instead of being confirmed in his philosophic disapproval of wedlock by what he endured in his own person from marriage, he survived his repugnance to the whilom detestable institution, and towards the close of his career stoutly maintained he had never regretted either of the marriages for which he paid so dearly.

Though it is impossible for a sane biographer to write of William Godwin with enthusiasm, or any kind of cordial admiration, no fair one can deny that, if he was deficient in the graces requisite for a hero of biographical romance, the author of *Political Justice* possessed several admirable qualities. To take a fair view of the man, who suffered severely for kindness shown

to Shelley, readers should toss aside as a mere humorous fabrication Miss Mitford's story of the way in which the bookseller of Skinner Street used to go 'down on his knees, flourishing a drawn dagger' at Shelley's feet, and 'threaten to stab himself if his dutiful son-in-law would not accept his bills.' They must also throw away as vile tattle all the stories of William Godwin's delight at finding himself the father-in-law of a young gentleman who might some day be a baronet. Whatever his failings, William Godwin was no such creature as these anecdotes imply,—no such snob as snobs have declared him. In the financial difficulties of his later time, and in the moral debasement that almost invariably results in some degree from long exposure to such difficulties, he was capable of begging for gifts from exalted persons, and getting up a pecuniary testimonial in acknowledgment of his own public services. But these were the acts of his declining age, when his brain was losing its alertness and his pen its cunning; when publishers treated him coldly as a man 'no longer what he was,' and children (not his own) hung about him, asking him, not only for bread, but for costly education. They were also acts done in a period when men of letters were taught by social usage to be something less than self-dependent. At his worst, Godwin never (like Leigh Hunt) sought the gifts of rich people in order that he might enjoy indolence and luxuries. Ever industrious to the utmost of his ability, and ever glad to be so, Godwin at the worst sought help only that he might be more helpful to those who were dependent on him. Moreover, Godwin was one of the men who have so strong a title to the world's tenderness and even to its reverence, that whilst gratitude enjoins us to judge them at their best, justice forbids us to judge them at their worst.

Flattered on Northcote's canvas, and flattered still more in Mr. Kegan Paul's photograph of Northcote's picture, William Godwin's presence was on the whole by no means agreeably impressive; but for the badness of the worst feature of his more remarkable than pleasing countenance he was almost compensated by the goodness of his eyes. 'He has,' Southey wrote in 1797, 'large noble eyes, and a nose,—oh, most abominable nose! Language is not vituperation enough to describe the effect of its downward elongation.' Interfering with the effect of a shapely mouth, this grotesquely elongated nose seemed set on

moving down to the chin of corresponding prominence. From the portrait to which reference has been made, Godwin seems in his earlier middle age to have had a visage remarkable rather for tenuity than massiveness; but Hogg's account of the philosopher's appearance affords evidence that delicacy was no characteristic of the Skinner-Street bookseller's personal aspect. It would have been well if, on dropping his title to reverence, the young *littérateur* had also dropt the garb and manner that long afterwards reminded beholders of his original calling. When he dined *tête-à-tête*, and for the first time with William Godwin, Hogg observed that the 'short, stout, thickset old man, of very fair complexion,' and a head no less remarkable for baldness than magnitude, had altogether the 'appearance of a Dissenting minister;'—a statement to be regarded as sufficient testimony that the author of *Caleb Williams* had not altogether the appearance of a gentleman, at least in the opinion of Mr. Hogg, ever disdainful of Dissenters.

Another thing to come under the saucy young Templar's notice was that, whilst having altogether the 'appearance of a Dissenting minister,' his companion lacked the colloquial address of a gentleman of society and breeding. His articulation wanted distinctness, and his uneasy utterance was attended by a show of effort and distress, that might almost be called an impediment. But though painful on being noticed for the first time, this difficulty ceased to trouble listeners when they grew accustomed to it, and even gave an agreeable distinctiveness to a somewhat harsh and discordant voice.

William Godwin's moral nature resembled his appearance and manner, in comprising several agreeable and commendable qualities, without being altogether pleasing or in any degree remarkable for dignity. To the last, also, it resembled them in affording indications of the humility of his original condition and earlier circumstances. The man of intellect, whose costume and bearing reminded people that he had formerly been a Dissenting minister in small market-towns, never survived the influence of the rural conventicle; never outlived the social influences of the humble and unrefined people, who had surrounded him in his days of ministerial service. The egregious vanity, that animated him from youth to old age, was not the almost generous infirmity to be observed in the elegant and refined, but the mean and despicable vanity of the rude and vulgar-minded.

Ever accessible to flatterers, he swallowed the grossest adulations with keen relish ;—with ludicrous greed, if it were prepared for his palate by feminine artifice. When the postman laid a letter on his Skinner-Street shop-counter, the philosopher's countenance flushed if he saw himself designated in the superscription ' Mr. Godwin,' instead of ' William Godwin, *esquire*.'

On the other hand, he had numerous good qualities. He was, upon the whole, truthful and honest; just to men he disliked and principles he disapproved, and altogether the benevolent man he commended himself for being. In all that related to his opinions on politics, religion, and the social virtues, and his ways of promulgating and enforcing those opinions, he was sincere as sunlight, and absolutely cantless. The only fault of his sympathetic and judicious benevolence was that it sometimes exceeded his means. Alike in the days when he was a needy hack, in his brief term of prosperity, and in the long period of his financial difficulties, poor people hung about him and had money from him. Beneficent to his indigent relatives, he was no less beneficent to persons not of his kindred. The interest he displayed in young men, and the pains he took for their mental, moral, and material welfare, cannot be too highly commended. From the date of his marriage with Mary Wollstonecraft, he was a bright example of domestic virtue. A good husband to that curious woman, who, during their brief association, tried him not a little with her captious and querulous temper; he was a good husband to his second wife, who (though by no means so bad a person as the wilder Shelleyan enthusiasts would have us believe) tried him for a long period almost as vexatiously as Mary Wollstonecraft tried him for a short one. A man is not to be extolled for being good to his own children. But it is much to Godwin's credit that, whilst he was a good father to his daughter by Mary Wollstonecraft, and to his son by his second wife, he was quite as good a father to his three step-children—to Mary Wollstonecraft's illegitimate daughter Fanny, to Charles Clairmont (the second Mrs. Godwin's son by her former husband), and to Charles's sister Jane,—the Jane Clairmont *alias* Claire of Byronic story.

But though he is to be respected for all these good, honest, wholesome qualities, it remains that Godwin's unemotional nature and unrefined homeliness forbid the biographer to write

rapturously about him. No considerable man of letters has, in recent times, been more curiously wanting in the mental, moral, and personal graces, which the fancy is apt to associate with famous followers of the higher arts. Though he wrote many novels (one of them being a tale of no uncommon vigour), he was curiously wanting in romantic fervour and imaginativeness. Though he was ambitious of writing for the stage, and made several essays in dramatic literature, he was absolutely devoid of poetical sensibility. Capable of firm, though cold, friendship, he was absolutely incapable of love. When it occurred to him, in his twenty-ninth year, that he might as well have a wife to cook his daily chop and look after his shirt-buttons, he commissioned his sister to look out for a suitable young woman. In middle-age, when he slipped from ordinary friendship into a closer alliance with Mary Wollstonecraft, he was careful to provide himself with a peculiar and private lodging at a convenient distance from their common home in 'The Polygon,' Somers Town, in order that he might be able to spend most of his time well out of her way. Some ten or twelve months later, Mary Wollstonecraft was on her death-bed, sinking tranquilly, even happily, out of this life, under the soothing influence of an anodyne, given her a short time before by her medical attendant. 'Oh, Godwin, I am in heaven!' she ejaculated, in gratitude for the effect of the medicine, to her husband, standing over her. 'You mean, my dear,' he replied with more self-command than tenderness, 'that your physical sensations are somewhat easier.' It is all well, and very amusing, for Mr. Kegan Paul to gush over the 'blight' that came to Godwin's heart and life, from his 'untimeous' loss of the woman he never loved,—the woman whose tenderest feelings for him differed widely from the emotions of love. But readers of this page can need no assurance that the materialist, who reproved his wife so drolly for thinking herself in heaven, never took her to his embrace because he thought her an angel.

CHAPTER II.

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT.

The new Settler in George Street, Blackfriars—Mary's earlier Story—Woman of Letters—Her Five Years' Work—Her Attachment to Mr. Johnson—Coteries of Philosophical Radicalism—*Anti-Jacobin* on the Free Contract—Godwin's Apostasy—From Blackfriars to Store Street—The Slut becomes a modish Woman—Her Passion for Fuseli—Her Appeal to Mrs. Fuseli—Mr. Kegan Paul's strange Treatment of Mr. Knowles—*Rights of Woman*—Plain Speech and Coarseness—Mary goes to Paris—She makes Imlay's Acquaintance—Her Assignations with him at the Barrier—Their Association in Free Love—Mr. Kegan Paul speaks deliberately—His Apology for Mary's Action—He falls between Two Stools—Wife in the eyes of God and Man—Letters to Imlay—Badness of Mary's Temper—Her consequent Quarrels with Imlay—Her Sense of Shame at her Position—Birth of her illegitimate Child—Her Withdrawal from France—Her Norwegian Trip—Her Wretchedness and Rage—Dissolution of the Free Love Partnership—Mary's Attempt to commit Suicide—Was she out of her Mind?—Her Union with Godwin in Free Love—Their subsequent Marriage—Their Squabbles and Differences—Their Daughter's Birth—Mary Wollstonecraft's Death—Mrs. Shelley's biographical Inaccuracies.

ON or about St. Michael's Day of 1787, a woman, whose dress betrayed an unfeminine indifference to the refinements of costume, and whose intelligent countenance possessed no beauty superior to ordinary comeliness, took possession of her new quarters in a small house in George Street, Blackfriars, which had been hired for her occupation, and provided with a few needful articles of furniture, by Mr. Joseph Johnson, the bookseller and publisher of St. Paul's Churchyard. No longer young, though courtesy would still style her so, this woman,—whose abundant brown-auburn tresses showed no threads of grey, whose clear and clever brown eyes would have been more effective had not one of them suffered from a slight paralytic drooping of the lid, whose complexion preserved a girlish freshness, and whose countenance would have been more agreeable had it not been for certain indications of sadness and asperity,—was in the middle of her twenty-ninth year, when she crossed

the threshold of her new home for the first time. At that season of her history, no casual observer of her face was likely to regard it with admiration ; but few attentive scrutinizers of its lineaments failed to discover in them the signs of intellectual force. To take a fair view of this woman's future behaviour, and see how far she has been misrepresented by censors and flatterers, it is needful to glance at her earlier story.

The granddaughter, on her father's side, of a Spitalfields manufacturer, the daughter of a man rich enough to live in idleness, Mary Wollstonecraft began her life's battle with a miserably slender education and an embittering sense of having been defrauded of her birthright to gentility by her father's vicious weakness. Regarding herself as a gentlewoman by reason of her grandfather's opulence and the respectability of her mother's ancestors, this daughter of a drunken father (with several children,—three sons and three daughters) found herself in a position that, denying her the enjoyments to which she had once thought herself entitled, required her to shift and provide for herself in default of a father capable of providing for her. It is not surprising that the girl, with a fervid and far from amiable temper, thought contemptuously of a sire, so careless for his wife's happiness and the interests of his offspring. Other matters quickened her sense of life's hardship. At the threshold of her twenty-second year she lost her mother (whom her self-indulgent father speedily replaced with a second wife), and became the indignant witness of the domestic troubles of her favourite sister, Eliza, who was married to a dissolute and brutal man, named Bishop. Under these circumstances, she could think her father and brother-in-law exceptionally bad men ; or, rating them as average examples of masculine nature, she could form an equally unfavourable and unjust estimate of the sex they discredited. For a while Mary Wollstonecraft took the latter course. Had she possessed an admirer in the ranks of the hateful sex, she would no doubt have taken the other view of her sire and her sister's husband. But in those days the woman, who became almost handsome in middle age, missed little of downright ugliness, and from personal experience knew nothing of masculine homage. The woman of quick temper and vehement emotionality may be presumed to have felt acutely the neglect coming to her from her want of girlish attractiveness.

Going out into the world, when fortunate girls are choosing their bridesmaids, Mary fought poverty in various ways,—now in the company of her friend Fanny Blood and Fanny's mother (who took in needlework), now in the company of her sisters, and now in the dwellings of strangers. For a while she earned her livelihood with the needle. Then the sisters kept a school at Stoke Newington, one of London's northern suburbs,—a school that declined to return the compliment and keep the enterprising sisters. Newington Green is memorable in Mary's annals for other matters, besides this ungrateful seminary for young ladies. It was there that she wrote her first book, *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*, for which she received ten guineas; and it was from the same Green that she started for her run to Lisbon, at the entreaty of her vehemently beloved Fanny Skey (*née* Blood), who lived just long enough to die in her friend's arms. On Mary's return from Portugal to the north London suburb, the unremunerative school was given up; and parting from her sisters, Mary went off to Ireland to serve a dame of fashion and high quality (Lady Kingsborough) in the capacity of governess to her ladyship's daughters, with a yearly salary of 40*l.*,—a situation procured for her by the Rev. Mr. Prior (an Assistant-Master at Eton, and one of the several clergymen who befriended her at the outset of her career); the situation in which she found time to go forward with her French studies, and write some stories for her publisher; the situation in which, though treated with abundant kindness, Mary was more than slightly miserable (as a young woman of her quick and querulous temper was bound to be anywhere). Thus she had spent her time from the middle of her twenty-second to the middle of her twenty-ninth year. She had worked by turns with her needle and her pen; she had failed at school-keeping, and been miserable as a governess, in a great family; and now she has just settled herself in the little house in George Street, Blackfriars, with the intention of earning her livelihood as a bookseller's hack and author by profession.

Johnson, the bookseller and publisher, showed himself a shrewd man of business in engaging the young woman, who had been introduced to him by the scholarly and benevolent Rev. John Hewlett. Seeing from the little books he had already taken of her that she possessed the 'literary knack,' seeing also, from personal intercourse with her, that she was

industrious and resolutely set on winning a position amongst women of letters, the publisher came to the conclusion that she would prove a more serviceable instrument in his hands than any of the tippling scholars he was in the habit of employing to write essays, translate French pamphlets, and dress manuscripts for the press. The woman, who, in her delight at finding herself in regular literary employment, regarded her publisher as her benefactor,—the woman, who seldom ate meat and rarely drank anything but water or tea, was a more intelligent, punctual, and manageable scribe, than any hack Mr. Johnson could have picked from the taverns, frequented by indigent men of letters. Temperate, sedulous, quick with her pen, and especially desirous to please her employer, the clever woman was glad to work twelve hours a-day in her tiny tenement, and deemed herself well rewarded by fair payment and the almost parental interest the publisher took in her proceedings. Working strenuously six days of the week, she usually dined on Sunday at Mr. Johnson's table, where she met some of the most notable scholars, artists, and writers of the period.

For five years she led this laborious and upon the whole not unhappy life, re-writing the English translation (from the Dutch) of *Young Grandison*; translating *Necker on Religious Opinions* and *Lacater's Physiognomy* from the French; compiling the *French Reader*; producing *Elements of Morality from the German*; working at a novel, entitled *The Cave of Fancy*; throwing off countless articles and critical notices for *The Analytical Review*; putting into English numerous French political pamphlets, that, keeping her *au courant* in the public affairs of France, quickened her sympathy with the revolutionary movement, and her admiration of the revolutionary leaders of that country; and together, with other original essays, sending through the press the *Answer to Burke*, and the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, written during the first outcry against the first part of *The Rights of Man*, by Thomas Paine, whose acquaintance she had made before she was so imprudent as to christen her comparatively inoffensive essay after his notorious book, and thereby to associate herself in the popular imagination with the man of evil fame, and with the work that only a few months later was declared by the King's Bench jury 'a false, scandalous, malicious, and seditious libel.' In the five

years, during which she was thus busily employed, Mary Wollstonecraft helped her brother and sisters largely with her earnings, whilst in order to do so she denied herself comforts to which she cannot have been wholly indifferent, and pleasures which so lively and emotional a woman must have desired. Mr. Johnson, in his later time, was of opinion that she could not have spent in this period less than 200*l.* on her needy relatives; and there is no reason to think the publisher's rough estimate excessive. The woman, who, whilst subsisting chiefly on vegetables and exercising a severe economy in every department of her strictly personal expenditure, used in this manner so large a proportion of her slender and toilsome earnings was, at least, a woman to be honoured on certain grounds and from certain points of view.

During the first four of these five years, Mary Wollstonecraft remained in the modest quarters, in George Street, taken and furnished for her in 1787 by Mr. Johnson, of whose tender and humane treatment of her she wrote with gratitude and affection. Writing and speaking in this strain of his goodness and tenderness, she was at no pains to conceal from the bookseller the feelings with which she regarded him. But though she sometimes styled it 'love,' there is no reason to think her liking for the staid and rather formal publisher resembled in any way or degree the idolatrous admiration she soon displayed for Fuseli the painter, or the passionate tenderness she somewhat later lavished on Imlay, the American man of letters. It was the affection a woman, of Mary's essentially generous nature and peculiar circumstances, would necessarily feel for the man, greatly her senior, who had befriended her with equal delicacy and kindliness; had instructed her without assuming any air of authority over her; and had helped her out of difficulties, and introduced her to remunerative employment and congenial friends, without letting her feel herself patronized. At the end of her fourth year in the little house in George Street (Michaelmas, 1791), Mary Wollstonecraft moved to Store Street, where she resided till her departure for France in December, 1792, seeing probably something less of the Radical bookseller, but feeling no less affectionately towards him, working no less sedulously for him.

During these five years Lady Kingsborough's whilom governess changed considerably in her views of life and society, her mental characteristics, and her appearance. Partly due

to time and natural development, these changes were in a greater degree due to the influence of her professional pursuits, of the books she read, of the circles in which she found recreation, and of the friendships she formed in those circles. Strongly disposed to liberalism before she settled in George Street, she would probably, under any circumstances, have developed into an ultra-liberal. It was therefore a matter of course, that the publisher's hack, who in the way of her profession became a translator of revolutionary pamphlets, quickly adopted the views and conclusions of the revolutionists and republicans. It was also a matter of course that the emotional and sympathetic woman, who affected powerfully the sensibilities of those she encountered, was in like manner affected by them. Nor is it surprising that the woman who, after entering her thirtieth year, became better looking every year she lived, was in the earlier term of middle life more thoughtful of her appearance, and more anxious to exhibit it to the best advantage, than she had been when she was a plain and unattractive young person. In this last respect the change in Mary Wollstonecraft was almost comically striking to those who, on greeting her as a former acquaintance in Store Street, had not seen her since the opening of her second year in George Street. During her residence in Blackfriars, dressing with severe economy (partly in order that she might have more money to give to her brothers and sisters, and partly because personal vanity was still foreign to her nature), she was the veriest caricature of a philosophical sloven. Her costume in the streets consisted of an ill-fitting habit of such coarse cloth, as was generally worn by London milk-women of the succeeding generation, a badly kept beaver hat, black stockings and clumsy shoes. Indoors she wore the same coarse habit when the weather was cold. In summer she sate at her desk in a cotton dressing-gown, or with no garment over her stays. On changing the place of her abode she changed her dressmaker and consulted a milliner. A slut in Blackfriars, she dressed like a woman of fashion in Store Street. Though he was not the sole cause of it, Fuseli was largely accountable for this in Miss Wollstonecraft's outward style.

Of all the numerous acquaintances she made in the coteries of Philosophic Radicalism, the three persons to influence Mary Wollstonecraft most powerfully and enduringly were Thomas Paine, Henry Fuseli, and William Godwin. Long before

William Godwin loved her, so far as it was possible for a man of his cold nature to love any woman; long before it ever occurred to her that she would live to be his wife, or even to have a liking for him, William Godwin's declarations against marriage converted her to an open approval of the doctrines of Free Love, making her a Free Lover in principle, some while sooner than the time when she became a Free Lover in practice.

Of all this philosopher's doctrines on social questions, none were more acceptable to his admirers than those that aimed at discrediting lawful wedlock, as an arrangement fruitful of misery and moral disease; fruitful of no kind of felicity, that would not flow in clearer and more liberal streams from a system of virtuous concubinage, under which spouses would be drawn together by love and a sense of mutual affinity, and remain at liberty to part from one another, as soon as they should cease to love, and should discover their unfitness for, one another. Whilst vicious libertines applauded the doctrines that seemed to justify, or at least to palliate, their immorality, and extolled the arrangement with which it was proposed to replace the old-fashioned wedlock, because it seemed to them an arrangement under which a profligate might have half-a-hundred mistresses in succession, without incurring the annoyances of social obloquy, virtuous libertines—enthusiasts of both sexes, wholly pure of wicked passion, with no fire of lust in their veins, no taint of lasciviousness in their blood—saw in Free Love the one wholesome remedy for certain of the worst ills of civilization. An entire bookcase might be filled with the literature that streamed from the press in commendation of Free Love (as a righteous substitute for debasing matrimony), during the last twenty years of the last century. The *Anti-Jacobin* made good fun of this literature on 18th December, 1797, in the letter written to the *Anti-Jacobin's* editor, by Miss Lætitia Sourby, about certain deplorable changes for the worse in her papa's temper, principles, and demeanour.

'But' (says Miss Lætitia) 'to return to my father—who is now always reading Books and Pamphlets that seem quite wicked and immoral to my mind and my poor Mother's, whom it vexes sadly to hear my Father talk before company, that Marriage is good for nothing, and ought to be free to be broken by either party at will. It was but the other day that he told her, that if he were to choose again, by the New Law in the only Free Country in the world, he would prefer Concubinage—so he said in my hearing.'

Thus it was that the *Anti-Jacobin* ridiculed the Free Lovers and their literature at the close of the very year in which they were thrown into lively commotion by William Godwin's shameful act of apostasy from his own lovely doctrines, in making Mary Wollstonecraft his lawful wife at St. Pancras Church :— a commotion curiously comparable with the stir of surprise and indignation, that greatly agitated the favourers of the Free Contract only a few years since, when Marian Evans (after living in free promise with George Henry Lewes till his death) gave herself to an excellent gentleman, and took him for better and worse *not* in Free Contract, but in holy matrimony, duly solemnized in a place of public worship, in accordance with the ordinances and requirements of the Church of England. The favourers of the Free Contract (who had for many years talked of Marian Evans and her genius as though they had a peculiar property in them, and of her *nom-de-plume* as though it were sheer profanity to hint that George Eliot could be wrong about anything) were comically moved and troubled by the incident, which told them how little (with all their fussy talkativeness) they had known of the great novelist's reverence for the sanctity of marriage, and for every usage tending to hallow it in the minds of men and women. In like manner were the enemies of Marriage disturbed some ninety years since on hearing that, after all he had written and said against lawful wedlock, and after living with her for months in Free Love, William Godwin had taken Mary Wollstonecraft to St. Pancras Church.

Having accepted Godwin's doctrines touching Marriage, and become a Free Lover in principle, during her residence in George Street, Mary Wollstonecraft conceived a strong sentiment of affectionate admiration for Henry Fuseli; a sentiment so fervid that, instead of being able to nurse it secretly in her breast, she was constrained to reveal it to him, and entreat him to give her place in his heart. Born in 1741, Fuseli was eighteen years her senior, and about fifty years of age, when he was thus entreated for affection by a woman, who at the time of making the prayer knew he was a happily married man. In justice to Miss Wollstonecraft it must be clearly put on the record, that Fuseli could have complied with the precise terms of her entreaty, without doing aught that would have rendered him guilty of conjugal infidelity, in the legal sense of the term. Averring to her friends (for beside worrying Fuseli with love-letters, she

spoke freely of her passion for him to divers of her friends) that she fully recognized Mrs. Fuseli's right to the person of her husband, Mary Wollstonecraft only desired that she and he should live together in sentimental union; that he should admit her to his confidence as a spiritual partner, and she be suffered to worship him as her spiritual mate; that they should cherish one another with mutual platonic fondness. It is not surprising, or much to her discredit, that she admired thus dangerously a man of Fuseli's genius, personal attractiveness, and conversational brilliance; though it certainly does not speak much for her delicacy that she was so communicative to him and others respecting her passion and his cruelty in declining to respond to it. What might have happened, had Fuseli been less resolute in the right way, may be left to the reader's imagination. Enough for the present writer to speak of what actually took place. Touched by love, piqued by the coldness of the man she adored, Mary strove to lure him into regarding her case more tenderly and mercifully. Taking blame to herself for the ill-success of her suit, it occurred to her that she would fare better if she were more careful of her personal appearance. Hence the choice of a new dressmaker and the conference with a fashionable milliner.

Moving to a brighter quarter of the town, Mary arrayed herself elegantly. At the same time she rained down letters on the man who, neglecting to answer them, sometimes kept them for days together in his pocket without opening them. More than once Fuseli expostulated with her on her unworthy behaviour, and begged her to act more reasonably. 'If I thought my passion criminal,' she answered, 'I would conquer it, or die in the attempt; for immodesty, in my eyes, is ugliness, and my soul turns with disgust from pleasure tricked out in charms which shun the light of heaven.' Mary's last attempt to achieve her purpose may surely be taken as evidence that she spoke sincerely of the purity of her passion. Going straight to Mrs. Fuseli, she implored the lady to receive her into her family, adding, 'As I am above deceit, it is right to say that this proposal arises from the sincere affection I have for your husband; for I find that I cannot live without the satisfaction of seeing and conversing with him daily.' Naturally Mrs. Fuseli declined to accede to the proposal, and thought it best for her and her

husband to withdraw from an engagement to accompany Mary on a six weeks' trip to Paris.

This is the outline of John Knowles's account of an affair that, known to many people through Mary's extravagantly indiscreet communicativeness, was of course told in various ways, more hurtful than the true way to her character. The evidence of the story, so true to Mary Wollstonecraft's human nature, is unimpeachable. Who was the narrator of the story? Fuseli's intimate friend, executor, and biographer, John Knowles, Fellow of the Royal Society, was also Mrs. Fuseli's intimate friend, after her husband's death. A gentleman of high place in the Navy Office, of good social position, of known integrity, Mr. Knowles gives his account of Fuseli's relations with Mary Wollstonecraft in the biography of the artist, which he wrote at Mrs. Fuseli's request and with her assistance, from the great painter's papers. The account, thus given to the world, and given (be it observed) in Mary Wollstonecraft's interest, even more than for the sake of the painter's reputation, is introduced to the readers of the biography with these words: 'Several publications having gone so far as totally to misrepresent the nature of his intercourse with this highly gifted lady, it becomes the duty of his biographer to give a plain statement of facts.' Written to clear Fuseli and his fair friend of imputations, more discreditable to her than to him, this plain statement is supported in several of its principal assertions by quotations from Mary's letters to Fuseli; for the accuracy of which passages the historian of unimpeachable credit, and conscientious carefulness, pledges his honour in these words, 'This and subsequent quotations respecting Mrs. Wollstonecraft are taken from her letters to Fuseli.' One of these quotations (already given in this work) is the passage from one of her letters in which she avows her passion for the painter, whilst declaring that, were it criminal, she would conquer it, or die in the attempt. In another of the quotations she declares her hope of uniting herself to the painter's mind. In a third quotation, after the failure of her application to Mrs. Fuseli, Mary begs the painter's pardon 'for having disturbed the quiet tenour of his life.' A fourth quotation gives the whole of the angry letter (signed 'Mary') in which, after her return from France to England (and long after the death of her passion for the painter), she scolds Fuseli for not

returning a visit she paid him ;—a letter curiously in harmony with Mr. Knowles's narrative. Thus the character of the narrative is supported by the high character of the narrator; by his singularly good opportunities for ascertaining the truth; by the fact that he was Fuseli's most confidential friend; by his intimacy with Mrs. Fuseli; and by the conclusive quality of his superabundant documentary evidence. The statement is in perfect harmony with Mary Wollstonecraft's career. It is a statement in which Fuseli, his wife, John Knowles, and Mary Wollstonecraft herself, may be said to stand forth as witnesses to its truth. Yet further, the statement is supported in its most important assertion by Godwin himself, who speaking, in his memoir of his first wife, of her intimacy with Fuseli, expresses a strong opinion that, had he been unmarried, she would have wished to become the painter's wife.

How are this statement and the superabundant evidence of its accuracy dealt with by one of the several gentlemen who, not content with white-washing and painting Shelley into a respectable member of a respectable county family, and white-washing Mary Godwin into a suitable wife for so respectable a member of so respectable a county family, must needs white-wash Shelley's second mother-in-law into a suitable mother for so suitable a wife for so respectable a member of so highly respectable a county family? In his *Life of William Godwin*, Mr. Kegan Paul ventures to say that 'Mr. Knowles is so extremely inaccurate in regard to all else that he says of her, that his testimony,' respecting Mary Wollstonecraft's intimacy with Fuseli, 'may be wholly set aside.' This astounding statement is made by a gentleman who does not give a single fact in support of the baseless charge of inaccuracy. It is directly the reverse of fact that Mr. Knowles is extremely inaccurate in what he says about Mary Wollstonecraft. In the memoir of Mary, forming the preface of his edition of her *Letters to Imlay*, Mr. Kegan Paul calls Knowles's careful and accurate statement a 'preposterous story,' i.e. a story contrary to nature and reason; a wrong, foolish, monstrous, absurd story. Fortunately Mr. Kegan Paul gives his reasons for thus stigmatizing a truthful story and conscientious writer. (1) Mr. Kegan Paul says, 'I have failed to find any confirmation whatever of this preposterous story.' (2) He says, 'I find much which makes directly against it, the strongest fact being that Mary remained to the

end the correspondent and close friend of Mrs. Fuseli.' What reasons for declaring the story 'preposterous'! It is proved completely, proved (as the phrase goes) up to the very hilt; but it must be false because Mr. Kegan Paul has failed to discover any additional confirmatory evidence of its truth,—evidence needed by no discreet reader. It must be false, because Mrs. Fuseli corresponded with Mary to the last! This is Mr. Kegan Paul's *strongest fact, making directly against* the statement.

This strongest fact is quite accordant with Knowles's statement, that Mary wanted from Fuseli nothing but such affection as he might have given her without breaking his marriage vow;—the statement made for the demolition of the stories that she had been guilty of criminal intercourse with him. Had the statement countenanced and confirmed these scandalous stories, the fact of Mrs. Fuseli's intimacy with Mary would no doubt have made against Knowles. But according to the statement, there was no reason why Mrs. Fuseli should have ceased to be friendly with Mary, though at the close of 1792 she thought Mary had better keep away from Fuseli's house and presence for a short time. On the other hand according to the statement, there were several reasons why Mrs. Fuseli should think generously and tenderly of Mary, who in the heat of her wild and fantastic passion had not wronged her, or wished to wrong her; had dealt frankly and fairly with her, and thrown herself upon her with entreaties for sympathy. As he admits this fact is his *'strongest fact'* against the story, Mr. Kegan Paul admits he has no facts whatever wherewith to discredit the story which he ventures to call 'preposterous.' The explanation of the matter is this. Published in 1831, the statement was offensive to Mrs. Shelley, who was just then writing a lot of fantastic, and inaccurate, and romantic nonsense about her mother, declaring her 'one of those beings who appear once, perhaps, in a generation, to gild humanity with a ray,' &c., &c. In a pet Mrs. Shelley condemned the truthful story as preposterous. Hence, it became an article of the Field Place creed and duty to think and declare the story preposterous. It follows that, writing in the interest and for the pleasure of Field Place, Mr. Kegan Paul took Mrs. Shelley's view of the story and thought it preposterous. Thinking the story preposterous, it was natural for Mr. Kegan Paul to discover egregious inaccuracy in one of the most conscientious and careful biographers of English literature.

Before they cross the Channel in the company of Mary Wollstonecraft, and take a look at revolutionary Paris, readers of this work should be told something more of her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman, with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects*. In christening this book after Thomas Paine's notorious work, and thereby rendering him the sincerest kind of flattery, Mary Wollstonecraft did herself a serious injury; for the inappropriate title caused her to be associated in public sentiment with her friend's evil repute and evil principles,—an association from which she suffers to this hour. So named, the treatise on feminine disqualifications and grievances was naturally assailed with excessive virulence by all persons, who held Paine in abhorrence. Appearing under an inoffensive title, the treatise would have displeased the majority of educated Englishwomen, and been severely handled by reviewers; but it would not have sent its author down to posterity hand in hand with the scurrilous politician and flippant freethinker.

The *Rights of Woman* is a statement of woman's need for a higher and healthier education; a demand that women should have equal educational advantages with the other sex; should be raised by education as nearly as possible to intellectual equality with men, and for this end should from earliest childhood be taught from the same books and trained in the same schools as persons of the male gender. The proposal that girls should be educated in the same schools with boys; that young women should pursue their higher studies in the same classrooms and colleges with young men; that from infancy to adult age, the young of both sexes should be reared and trained side by side, was a proposal certain ninety years since to provoke angry disapproval;—certain, even in these days of liberality and innovation, to cause fierce disputes, should it be put forward, as a serious suggestion to be acted upon by people of all classes throughout the country. But this bold and startling proposal was not the chief cause of the outcry against the *Rights of Woman*. To show their urgent need of a better education, the author gave a picture of the women of her period and country that stung them to fury, and in so doing, caused their fathers, and sons, and brothers, to rise in wrath against so merciless an assailant of the gentler sex. Mary Wollstonecraft's charge against Englishwomen was that they were frivolous, silly, deceitful, mean-natured, violent in their tempers, querulous,

peevish, indolent, immodest, uncleanly in their habits, wanting in delicacy; so wanting in common decency as to be in the habit of exposing their persons shamelessly to one another, although they affected to be unutterably shocked if by any accident they let a man get a view of their ankles. All this Mary Wollstonecraft said of Englishwomen of her own social degree; and she said it coarsely. No wonder there was an outcry against the author of the *Rights of Woman*! No wonder that simple English ladies spoke of her bitterly, as the arch-libeller of their sex; spoke of her with mingled terror, disgust, and indignation! No wonder that honest English gentlemen sided cordially with these simple English ladies.

Some of the coarseness of this censor of her sex may, no doubt, be regarded as a mere affair of superficial style, and was referable to the tone of the coteries in which she had been living for several years:—the coteries of Philosophic Radicalism, where speech was even more free than thought. But some of Mary Wollstonecraft's coarseness was due to natural want of refinement and a vein of vulgarity that, instead of playing only on the surface of her life, had its source in the depths of her soul. Her view of men and their feelings was as sordid as her view of women and their failings. Her conception of love as a force in human affairs would have discredited a chambermaid. Having its source in sensation, the tenderest and most delicate passion rose and fell with the variations of bodily desire. The result of purely physical causes, it waxed and waned with increase and decrease of nervous excitement. According to Miss Wollstonecraft's view of the relations of the sexes, wives were so many toys preserved for the diversion of the men who had appropriated them for their enjoyment, in compliance with a nervous disposition that, always more or less transient, was certain to perish in no long time. From its nature the sexual affection was the most inconstant and fickle of human forces. On marrying, every woman is admonished to anticipate the inevitable moment when her husband's tenderness will cease, her power of pleasing come to end,—the time when, on discovering her inability to charm her proprietor any longer, she will, most likely, survive her desire and desist from her efforts to please him. 'When the husband,' says Mary Wollstonecraft, 'ceases to be a lover—and the time will inevitably come—her desire' (*i.e.* the young wife's desire) 'will grow languid, or

become a spring of bitterness; and love, perhaps, the most evanescent of all passions, will give place to jealousy or vanity.' On a later page of her treatise, she says in the same hopeless strain, 'Love, from its very nature, must be transitory. . . . The most holy band of society is friendship. It has been well said, by a shrewd satirist, that "rare as love is, true friendship is still rarer."' Provided with the higher knowledge, brighter cleverness, finer tact, coming to her from higher education, a woman would be able to hold her husband's love for the longest possible period, and in some cases be able to retain his friendship after he has ceased to love her. In all cases, where the former lover declines to sink in the sober friend, the woman of higher education would be able to make herself fairly comfortable, without either his love or his friendship. It was mainly on these grounds, and for these considerations, that Mary Wollstonecraft insisted on woman's right to better training.

What doctrine,—what a teacher for Englishwomen! It was by such doctrine that Mary Wollstonecraft hoped to raise her sex from slavery and debasement to freedom and dignity. Such was the teacher of whom Mrs. Shelley wrote, 'Mary Wollstonecraft was one of those beings who appear once, perhaps, in a generation, to gild humanity with a ray which no difference of opinion nor chance of circumstances can cloud.' It must be remembered that *The Rights of Woman* is the only important original work by her pen that deserves serious consideration,—the solitary work in which she made a strenuous effort to influence the life and future of humanity. The busy woman of letters produced translations, compilations, slight essays, brief tales, critical notices by the score. A clever letter-writer, she produced during her life a charming volume of letters touching Sweden and Norway; and left behind her, for posthumous publication, other *Letters to Imlay*,—letters curiously and dismally in harmony with the sentiments and feeling of the essay on English womankind. But *The Rights of Woman* was her sole important original work. The one work, to be studied for information respecting her social theories, it is the one work by which she must be judged as a social teacher. Whatever their merits (and the works are by no means meritless), her other writings afford nothing to justify her younger daughter's estimate of her services to humanity. From what has been said of *The Rights of Woman*, readers may judge whether it

was a work 'to gild humanity with a ray' of moral sunshine, or a work to darken and depress humanity with dismal notions.

Unobservant of his heroine's deep-seated and ingrained coarseness of sentiment, Mr. Kegan Paul cannot shut his eyes to what I term her superficial coarseness,—the coarseness of diction that is in some degree, though by no means altogether, referable to the tone of the coteries in which she had lived chiefly for some five years.

'It may, however,' he says of her book, 'be admitted that her frankness on some subjects is little less than astounding, and that matters are discussed which are rarely named even among members of the same sex, far less printed for both. . . . Yet for extreme plain speaking, there was much reason and excuse. The times were coarser than ours, the days were not so far distant when the scenes were possible and the dangers real which Richardson's novels portray.'

Readers may infer from these admissions (by a biographer who would fain have us think Mary Wollstonecraft an angel) that the plain speaking to which Kegan Paul refers is *extremely* plain. Mr. Kegan Paul's admissions on these points are significant of much more than he says, to the disadvantage of the angelic Mary. Significant also are the commonplaces with which he palliates what he is constrained to acknowledge. From these commonplaces one might imagine gentlewomen of George the Third's time were so tainted with prevailing coarseness, as to be incapable of thinking and writing like gentlewomen. Sufficient evidence to the contrary may be found in the writings of Catharine Macaulay, Hester Chapone, Sophia Lee, Harriet Lee, Ann Radcliffe, Sarah Trimmer, Hannah More, Frances Burney, Lætitia Barbauld. Madame D'Arblay could exhibit the want of refinement, noticeable in the vulgar of her time, without ceasing to write like a woman of refinement. Though Elizabeth Inchbald lived in the same cliques as Mary Wollstonecraft, her pages are innocent of the 'plain speaking' that revolts the reader of *The Rights of Woman* and the *Letters to Imlay*. The simple fact is that, though her worst failing was aggravated by the society she kept, Mary Wollstonecraft sometimes wrote coarsely because she sometimes thought coarsely.

It is not surprising that at the close of 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft went to Paris, the capital to which all Englishmen and Englishwomen of revolutionary sentiment had for some time been looking with keen interest and enthusiastic

hopefulness. 'Well up' in contemporary French politics, the woman, who had translated the pamphlets of French politicians into English, and was known in Paris as their translator, naturally wished to see the people who had engaged so much of her thought, and to pass a few weeks in the capital where, without having seen it, she was no stranger. *The Rights of Woman* had been translated into French and praised by Parisian reviewers. It was sold on the boulevards and at the bookstalls on the quays, as a companion-book to *The Rights of Man*. At Paris she would be welcomed as a celebrity, honoured as one of the very few Englishwomen, clever and brave enough to be revolutionary,—the only Englishwoman who had at present rendered the Revolution good service with her pen. In the reception accorded so recently to Thomas Paine, by the garrison and municipality of Calais, and by the National Convention at Paris, she saw the honour and enthusiasm with which she would be welcomed at the port and the capital. Even though they forbore to plant the tricolour in her bonnet, the people of the department of Calais would hail her on landing as the friend and fellow-worker of Tom Paine, whom they had so lately chosen to represent them in the National Convention. At Paris she would receive the homage due to her literary success, and be welcomed as a daughter of 'the Revolution.'

In the spring of '92 she and the Fuselis had planned a six weeks' trip to Paris. Through incidents, of which enough has been already said, this plan for a summer's trip came to nothing. It remained for Mary Wollstonecraft to relinquish her scheme of going to Paris, to make it with other companions, or to go to France by herself. To relinquish the scheme she could not; for the course of events made her more and more desirous to go to Paris. Possibly she tried and failed to find other companions of the voyage. Anyhow she started for France alone on the 8th of December, 1792, going thither alone, and arriving at the capital, in the midst of the series of exciting incidents that closed with the King's execution.

Going thither openly and in her own name (a name of notoriety in Paris), she made her abode first under the roof of Madame Fillietaz, *née* Bregantz, a lady in whose school at Putney, Eliza Wollstonecraft (Mrs. Bishop), and Everina Wollstonecraft, had been assistant-governesses. Thus suitably placed in the house of her sisters' former employer, she remained there

for awhile, working hard at the language in whose accent she was greatly deficient. On getting a sufficient command of the French tongue, she went into Parisian society, and was so engrossed by its excitements that, instead of staying for only a few weeks, she remained at Paris for months, staying over February, though she had received ample warning that, if she would return to England, she should leave France promptly, before the declaration of war. Safe for the moment alike from danger, and the dread of it, Mary stayed on, congratulating herself on being the eye-witness of events of which she meant to be the historian. Entering France for a brief stay she remained in the country for two years and four months.

Going much into the world, she made the acquaintance (during the spring of 1793, if not earlier) of Captain Gilbert Imlay, citizen of the United States of America,—a handsome, clever gentleman of war, letters, and commerce; a soldier who had led his company in the struggle for American Independence; an author who had produced in a series of excellent letters a *Topographical Description of the Western Territory of North America*; a smart adventurer, who had come to Europe to act for the sale of land in America, and push his way to fortune in commercial enterprise. With a smooth and plausible tongue, Captain Imlay made a favourable impression on Mary, who (now grown into an almost handsome woman) found no difficulty in making a similar impression on him. In the course of their sentimental conversations on love and marriage, it struck both of them that it would be well for them to enjoy the former without assuming the fetters of the latter. It was enough for the handsome American that Mary returned his passion. As she consented to love him, and give him all he required, it was not for him to dictate the terms on which he would accept her kindness. As she had conscientious and philosophic objections to marriage, he was too gallant to draw her into an estate so repugnant to her sense of right. They loved one another. Mutual love was a sufficient sanction for the fulfilment of its own desire. As they loved one another, it was better for them to do so on terms, that would leave them at liberty to retire from one another when their mutual love, ‘the most evanescent of all human passions’ (*vide Rights of Woman*) should have perished. They agreed to dote on one another, not in lawful wedlock, but in Free Love.

Mr. Kegan Paul takes two different and quite irreconcilable views of Mary's action in this business. *In the first place*, he insists that she determined to associate herself with handsome Gilbert Imlay, because she disapproved of lawful marriage. 'She ran counter,' Mr. Kegan Paul says, in the *Memoir*, p. v., 'to the customs of society, yet not wantonly or lightly, but with forethought, in order to carry out a moral theory gravely and religiously adopted.' Further on, p. xxxviii., Mr. Kegan Paul says, 'Her view was that a common affection was marriage, and that the marriage-tie should not bind after the death of love, if love should die.' Hence Mr. Kegan Paul's readers are in the first place required to believe that Mary acted on and from religious principle in this business, and to honour her for so acting on and from principle, although 'she yet made the grand mistake of supposing that it is possible for one woman to undo the consecrated custom of ages; to set herself in opposition to the course of society, and not be crushed by it.' *In the second place*, and almost in the same breath, Mr. Kegan Paul declares that religious principle was not Mary's motive in this affair; but that she went into Free Love with Imlay, because a legal marriage could not have been readily effected between him and her, as she was the subject of a sovereign with whom France was at war; and that she would probably have insisted on being lawfully married—*i.e.* would have acted against her principles—if that course had at the same time been practicable and safe. It is obvious that if she acted on and from principle, Mary Wollstonecraft did not go to Imlay's arms in Free Love, merely because the way by lawful marriage was for the moment blocked; and that if she would have married him if she could, she is not to be commended for sacrificing herself in this matter on the shrine of religious principle. It is too much to require us at the same moment to admire her for acting courageously from principle, and at the same moment to believe she would have acted against her principle, had there been no legal impediment to the latter course. Mr. Kegan Paul should have seated himself on one stool or the other. He is undergoing the proverbial punishment of the man who tries to sit between two stools.

. What are Mr. Kegan Paul's grounds for saying that a legal marriage with Imlay was certainly difficult, apparently impossible, to Mary Wollstonecraft in Paris, in the spring of 1793? His grounds for this quite erroneous opinion are (1)

that she was a British subject; (2) that England and France were at war; (3) that her position as a British subject was full of danger; (4) that even if a marriage with Imlay was possible to her, she could not have made it without declaring her nationality to the civil officer; (5) that in Madame de Stael's novel of *Corinne*, Lord Nelvil could not marry Madame d'Arbigny, because to marry her he would have had to declare himself to the civil officer. In answer to these considerations, it is enough to say (1) that, though she was a British subject, Mary Wollstonecraft, as the child and favourer of revolution, and a famous writer, enjoying the friendship of Thomas Paine, and other powerful members of the National Convention, was in the spring of 1793 exempt from the perils and inconveniences pertaining to ordinary British subjects living at that time in Paris; (2) that, even had her position been perilous, it would not have been rendered more so by the declarations requisite for a marriage, as so celebrated an Englishwoman, living openly in Paris, was already well known to the civil functionaries; (3) that the case of the English nobleman in Madame de Stael's novel does not apply to circumstances of the Englishwoman in Paris,—Mary being a woman already known to the civil officer, and a woman, whose nationality would, on the moment of marriage, merge in the nationality of her husband, and remain therein during coverture. Mr. Kegan Paul is wrong alike in his facts and his law. Though she was at war with England, France was in cordial alliance with the United States of America; and the citizen of those States could have married Mary Wollstonecraft almost as easily in Paris as he could have married her in New York. Mr. Kegan Paul's hypothesis that Mary might have found it difficult and perilous to marry Imlay is a mere fancy, arising from misconceptions.

Further, Mr. Kegan Paul would have us believe that one of Mary Wollstonecraft's reasons for making a contract of Free Love with Gilbert Imlay was that she might have the security that would pertain to her from *appearing* to be the American gentleman's wife. The answer to this is, that instead of giving her the position and appearance of being his wife, the contract of Free Love (on its becoming known to her friends in France) only gave her the position and appearance of being his mistress; that her friends in France never regarded her as Imlay's wife; and that no security (in the sense suggested by Mr. Kegan

Paul) either came, or could be expected to come, to her from her notorious position, though, to palliate her action to her sisters, she used language in some letters that would countenance a different opinion. Events moved rapidly in France. Before the end of the year Thomas Paine had been turned out of the Convention and was in prison, whence he had reason for thinking he would be sent to the guillotine. Secure enough for the moment in the spring of 1793, Mary Wollstonecraft's position became perilous some months later; and there is abundant evidence that when her position became uneasy, and even hazardous, her relations with Imlay neither gave her security, nor diminished her sense of insecurity.

Mr. Kegan Paul assures the gentle matrons and the young gentlewomen of England that from the commencement of her association in Free Love with Imlay, Mary Wollstonecraft was his *wife*! In his biography of William Godwin, Mr. Kegan Paul says of her position towards Imlay, and her letters to him:—

‘She believed that his love, which was to her sacred, would endure. No one can read her letters without seeing that she was a pure, high-minded, and refined woman, and that she considered herself, in the eyes of God and man, his wife. . . . But they are the letters of a tender and devoted *wife*, who feels no doubt of her position.’

In the *Memoir* of the heroine, whom he thus exhibits to the admiration of our wives, and sisters, and daughters, Mr. Kegan Paul says:—

‘The kindness he’ (*i.e.* Imlay) ‘showed Mary Wollstonecraft disposed her to look on him favourably; *she soon gave him a very sincere affection, and consented to become his wife. I use this word deliberately, although no legal ceremony ever passed between them.*’

In these passages Mr. Kegan Paul states much that is the reverse of fact; much also that is disproved by the letters which he so strangely misrepresents.

Containing many passages that are winningly piquant and innocently charming; affording abundant evidence that their writer's affections were strongly concerned in this wretched *liaison*; betraying no few indications of a spirit almost to be styled high-mindedness; yielding superabundant evidence of the writer's cleverness and brilliancy, these letters are not the letters of a refined woman, or the letters of a woman who con-

siders herself the wife of the man to whom they are addressed. Still less are they the letters of a woman who feels herself secure of her position. Had she been a woman of nice refinement, she could not have written so lightly and copiously as she does of matters that a gentlewoman of refinement tells only to her physician, her nurse, her closest female friends, and shrinks from naming to her husband. Had she been the woman of singular refinement we are asked to believe her, she would have been less communicative to her correspondent about her health. Regard for the feelings of my readers forbids me to speak, even in the most guarded terms, of the more disagreeable details of these too circumstantial communications. In this respect, the letters are just such letters as, in the absence of positive testimony, the author of the *Rights of Woman* might be imagined to have written to the man, with whom she was living in Free Love. Instead of being the letters of a woman who considers herself a wife, she does not venture, even in her confidential communications to Imlay, to style herself his wife, whilst hinting how strongly she wished to be privileged to do so. Instead of being the letters of a woman 'feeling herself secure of her position,' nothing in them is more striking and pathetic than the evidence how painfully aware she was, that she held her admirer by only the slenderest thread.

Mr. Kegan Paul says that she believed Gilbert Imlay's love would endure. What a strange belief for a woman who thought no man's love capable of endurance; who wrote in the *Rights of Woman* that 'love, from its nature, must be transitory,' and was 'perhaps the most evanescent of all passions;' who had taught in the same book that every woman should anticipate the *inevitable* death of her husband's love for her! Anyhow, ere the first four of the seventy-seven letters to Imlay had been written, she knew him to have been a fickle lover:—

'I have found out,' she wrote from Paris to Imlay at Havre, in September, 1793, in the fourth of the long series of letters, 'that I have more mind than you, in one respect: because I can, without any violent effort of reason, find food for love in the same object, much longer than you can. The way to my senses is through my heart; but, forgive me! I think there is sometimes a short cut to yours.'

Surely, this is good evidence that, from an early date of their acquaintance, she knew he was a fickle worshiper of

womankind and a libertine. Moreover, what a confession to be made by Mr. Kegan Paul's bright example of feminine purity and delicacy,—the woman who is said by Mr. Kegan Paul to have come to Paris without having had any affair of the heart! She had learnt in September, 1793, that the way to her *senses* was through her *heart*, and that she could 'find food for love in the same object' longer than her correspondent could. A great deal for a woman to learn between the end of December and the middle of the following September! It must, however, be admitted that Paris, at the end of the last century, was a school where a woman picked up such knowledge fast.

Mr. Kegan Paul is sure that, from the commencement of her association with Imlay in Free Love, Mary Wollstonecraft considered herself as his *wife* 'in the eyes of God and man;' and Mr. Kegan Paul, 'using this word deliberately,' styles her the *wife* of Gilbert Imlay. Let us look into this matter. At the commencement of this virtuous association, Gilbert and Mary were not living under the same roof; but having separate places of abode, they met secretly by assignation for the enjoyment of their conjugal privileges. One of their places, perhaps their only place, of assignation, was a certain 'barrier' of the French capital, near which barrier the act occurred, that resulted in the birth of Mary Wollstonecraft's illegitimate daughter in April, 1794. The pleasure of these meetings at the barrier was referred to by Mary, when, in the twenty-third of the famous series of letters, she wrote on 22nd September, 1794, from Paris to Imlay:—'Bring me, then, back your barrier-face, or you shall have nothing to say to my barrier-girl.' On the following day, she wrote in the same vein:—

'I desired you, in one of my other letters, to bring back to me your barrier-face—or that you should not be loved by my barrier-girl. I know that you will love her more and more, for she is a little affectionate, intelligent creature, with as much vivacity, I should think, as you could wish for.'

When writing thus to her already cold and remiss partner in Free Love, Mary pined to see once again the radiant face of the lover, whose 'barrier-girl' was with her at Paris,—a five-months' infant, delighting in three things, 'to ride in a coach, to look at a scarlet waistcoat, and hear loud music.'

Mary and Gilbert were still living apart and meeting one

another by assignation, when she wrote to him on some unknown day of August, 1793 :—

‘ You can scarcely imagine with what pleasure I anticipate the day, when we are to begin almost to live together ; and you would smile to hear how many plans of employment I have in my head, now that I am confident my heart has found peace in your bosom I will be at the barrier a little after ten o'clock to-morrow.’

By this time they had arranged ‘almost to live together,’ but they had not begun to do so. Mary’s disagreeable communicativeness about her attacks of faintness and the movements of her little ‘twitcher’ leaves no room for question that her child, born at Havre in April, 1794, was not born prematurely. It is therefore a matter of certainty that Mary was on the way to become a mother, before the lovers ceased to have separate places of abode and to meet by assignation. Even by Mr. Kegan Paul it must be admitted that this was a curious way of living for the woman, who already considered herself the wife of Imlay in the eyes of God and *man*. Anyhow at first Mary did her best to escape the eyes of man.

After living under the same roof with her for some six weeks, Captain Imlay (for the prosecution of affairs of business, and possibly also in pursuit of pleasure) went off to Havre, where he had commercial concerns, and to other places requiring his presence ; Mary being left to her own devices for several months in Paris, whence she wrote to her partner in Free Love some of the most interesting of the letters, of which Mr. Kegan Paul speaks so highly. Misrepresenting matters so as to adapt them to his fanciful conception of Mary’s life and character, Mr. Kegan Paul also commits errors without any apparent object for doing so. For instance, he says, ‘ Towards the close of 1793 Mary joined Imlay at Havre, and there in the spring of 1794 gave birth to a girl, who received the name of Fanny, in memory of the dear friend of her youth ;’ saying this in spite of the evidence afforded by the letters he is editing, that Mary remained at Paris well into February, 1794. From Paris she wrote Imlay *one* published letter in September, 1793 ; *one* published letter in November, 1793 ; *four* published letters in December, 1793 ; *four* published letters in January, 1794 ; *four* published letters in February, 1794. All these fourteen letters were written by her at Paris ; the last of them (penned at the

moment of her departure from the capital for Havre) ending with these words :—

‘I am well, and have no apprehension that I shall find the journey too fatiguing, when I follow the lead of my heart. With my face turned to Havre my spirits will not sink; and my mind has always hitherto enabled my body to do whatever I wished.—Yours affectionately, MARY.’

In an editorial note Mr. Kegan Paul admits that all these letters were written during Mary’s ‘separation of several months from Imlay;’ and yet in the *Memoir* he represents that the separation ended in December, and that she joined Imlay at Havre ‘towards the close of 1793.’ This is the way in which the writers, whose *care* has been commended so enthusiastically by Mr. Froude, deal with their evidences. Doubtless they are accurate enough for Mr. Froude, and quite as accurate as he is himself.

The letter she wrote to Imlay from Paris on 30th December, 1793 (Monday night) contains this remarkable passage, to which the reader should give his best attention :—

‘A melancholy letter from my sister Eliza has also harassed my mind—that from my brother would have given me sincere pleasure; but for There is a spirit of independence in his letter, that will please you; and you shall see it, when we are once more over the fire together. I think that you would hail him as a brother, with one of your tender looks, when your heart not only gives a lustre to your eye, but a dance of playfulness, that he would meet with a glow half made up of bashfulness, and a desire to please the ——; where shall I find a word to express the relationship which subsists between us? Shall I ask the little twitcher? But I have dropt half the sentence that was to tell you how much he would be inclined to love the man loved by his sister. I have been fancying myself sitting between you, ever since I began to write, and my heart has leapt at the thought! You see how I chat to you.’

Written in her brightest, tenderest, most womanly vein, this exquisite piece of writing shows not only the affectionateness of Mary’s nature, but also how far she was from considering herself a wife in the eyes of God and man, and how acutely she felt the shame and inconveniences of her position towards Imlay. One would like to see the words omitted from the passage,—probably the words of a declaration that she could not enjoy her younger brother’s letter from the sense of humiliation

coming to her from thinking, how she could nerve herself to tell him of the relation, in which she and Imlay stood to one another. 'Where,' she writes with pathos and tact, 'shall I find a word to express the relationship which subsists between us?' She wants a word she could give her brother, without fearing it would drive all care for her from his heart. Had she considered herself a wife in the eyes of man, she would not have wanted the word. 'Shall I ask the little twitcher?' asks the woman, within four months of her accouchement. Could a woman ask more touchingly and winningly for the lawful marriage, that would make her what she wanted to be in the eyes of the world; would save her child from the ignominy of shameful birth; would give her the name she could utter to her brother, without burning blush and scalding tears? 'Considered herself a wife in the eyes of God and man!' Did she so consider herself? Then why this touching prayer to the man whom she dared not call her husband, even in the privacy of a letter, beginning with 'My Best Love?'

There is another passage in the letters, to be remembered in connexion with the foregoing evidence that, instead of considering herself a wife in the world's eyes, she could not even consider herself a wife in Imlay's eyes. 'Finding,' she wrote to him from Paris on 1st January, 1794, 'that I was observed, I told the good women, the two Mrs. —s, simply that I was with child: and let them stare! and —, and —, nay, all the world may know it for aught I care! Yet I wish to avoid —'s coarse jokes.' Had she been a wife in the eyes of society (as Mr. Kegan Paul insists she was), the ladies would not have stared, would have seen no cause to stare, on the announcement of the matter, with which Mary caused them to open their eyes with astonishment. Had she been regarded as a wife by her Parisian friends, she would have had no cause to fear coarse jests about her health. It is clear the woman, who could not venture to style herself 'his wife' even to Imlay, had not ventured to style herself his wife to her Parisian friends.

Now-a-days the less scrupulous of our Free Lovers make so free with the queen's English as to style themselves husband or wife, and declare themselves married people, without having gone through any form of marriage. Speaking deliberately, Mr. Kegan Paul says they have a right to do so, the word wife being in his opinion strictly applicable to a female Free Lover.

Speaking deliberately, I say they have no right to apply to a woman, who is not lawfully married, a familiar title assigned by social rule and law of language, as a description of their legal estate, to women who are lawfully married ; or, on the other hand, to apply the correlative title to men who are not lawfully married. I say they have no right to change at their will the signification of familiar English words, so as to bring them into accordance with their notions touching the relations of the sexes.

In the dictionaries of the English language 'husband' is defined as 'a man contracted or joined to a woman by marriage;' 'wife' is defined as 'a woman who is united to a man in the lawful bonds of wedlock;' and 'marriage' is defined as 'the legal union of a man and woman for life.' The world accepts these definitions, acts upon them, and will, I trust, continue to act upon them. Speaking deliberately, I say (Mr. Kegan Paul notwithstanding) that persons who use these words for the misdescription of Free Lovers, with an intention to deceive their hearers, are guilty of falsehood. I say this deliberately, though Marian Evans (noble creature though she was, and exemplary in all matters, apart from her miserable association with George Henry Lewes) used to speak and write of him as her 'husband.' Possibly Marian Evans did not so misdescribe her relation to George Lewes *with an intention to deceive*. I have no evidence that she ever so misdescribed herself and Lewes to any person, without having reason to think the person cognizant of the facts of the case. And *I do know* that to certain gentlewomen, she was honourably communicative on the matter, so that they might not associate with her, under a misapprehension respecting her domestic position. But her conduct cannot affect the obligation of Free Lovers to be truthful. Having the courage of their opinions, they should tell the world openly what they are. They might style themselves 'bosom-friends,' or call themselves 'free husbands and free wives.' But they have no right to call themselves 'husbands' and 'wives.' Out of respect for themselves and their principles they should refrain from the ordinary untruthful practice of 'kept mistresses' and their keepers.

Ninety years since the woman (who according to Mr. Kegan Paul considered herself a wife in the eyes of God and *man*) did not presume to style herself Imlay's wife even to her own sisters. All she could do was to speak of herself truthfully as

living in France under his 'protection,' when on 10th March, 1794, she wrote from Havre to her sister Everina, 'If any of the many letters I have written have come to your hands or Eliza's, you know I am safe, through the protection of an American, a most worthy man, &c.;'—words committed to paper, when she was within a few weeks of giving birth to her illegitimate child. To her own sister Mary Wollstonecraft described herself as a woman living under 'protection.' Mr. Kegan Paul published the letter in which she thus describes herself; and yet he says she considered herself as wife in the eyes of her fellow-creatures.

It has been already remarked that Mary Wollstonecraft had an unhappy temper. Even by Mr. Kegan Paul it is admitted that his angelical Mary was 'excitable and hasty-tempered, apt to exaggerate trifles, sensitive to magnify inattention into slights, and slights into studied insults.' Put into plain terms this is an admission that she was a violent-tempered and bad-tempered woman. She was no woman to live happily with a man, either as wife or Free Lover. Even before their first brief term of cohabitation, she had tried Imlay by her caprice and pettishness. In the letter (of August, 1793), in which she anticipates the delight of 'beginning almost to live together' with him, she says:—

'Cherish me with that dignified tenderness, which I have only found in you; and your own dear girl will try to keep under a quickness of feeling, that has sometimes given you pain. Yes, I will be *good*, that I may deserve to be happy; and whilst you love me, I cannot again fall into the miserable state which rendered life a burden almost too heavy to be borne.'

Let the reader consider these words. In Letter vi. (a genuine love-letter), dated from Paris to Imlay at Havre, she writes: 'No; I have thy honest countenance before me—Pop—relaxed by tenderness; a little—little wounded by my whims.' In Letter xi., of January, 1794, she entreats, 'with eyes overflowing with tears and in the humblest attitude,' to be pardoned for worrying her admirer with unreasonable epistles to which he has replied in a 'kind and rational letter;'—adding, 'It is time for me to grow more reasonable, a few more of these caprices of sensibility would destroy me.' In the same month she writes to him:—

'Yesterday, my love, I could not open your letter for some time; and, though it was not half as severe as I merited, it threw me into

such a fit of trembling, as seriously alarmed me. . . . One thing you mistake in my character, and imagine that to be coldness which is just the contrary. For, when I am hurt by the person most dear to me, I must let out a whole torrent of emotions, in which tenderness would be uppermost, or stifle them altogether; and it appears to me almost a duty to stifle them when I imagine *that I am treated with coldness.*'

The letters abound with similar evidence that, quarrelling from an early date of their association, they went on quarrelling and making it up, till they grew heartily sick of one another, and saw little of one another. At the most, be it observed, the whole period of their association (from their first introduction to one another till their final parting) did not exceed two years and ten months, and at the fullest computation they did not spend more than twelve months of this time in one another's society. Whilst Mary was at Paris, Imlay was for months together at Havre, or other places, away from her. For the greater part of her stay at Havre, he was at Paris. Soon after her return to Paris, he went off to London. Running from England to France to see her for a short time, he returned by himself to England. Soon after her return to England, she went off with her child and nurse in the summer of 1795, for her trip to Sweden, Norway, and Denmark.

I am no apologist for Imlay. In a memoir I wrote of Mary Wollstonecraft twenty-eight years since, I called him 'a pitiful scamp;' and though I may doubt whether I should have spoken of him quite so disdainfully, I am still disposed to think him a mean-spirited, though clever, creature. The evidence respecting his character and ways of life is far from complete. Hitherto only one side has been told of the story of his relations with Mary Wollstonecraft; *her* side of the story, dressed and redressed by her friends and admirers. From the insufficient evidence, he appears to have differed morally in no important respect or degree from the ordinary run of the men, who used to be styled men of the world, men of pleasure, and men of gallantry. Whilst it is certain that Mary Wollstonecraft entered the association with no confidence that it would last 'for ever,' there is no reason to suppose that he entered it with any desire for its permanence. Whilst it is certain that the faults of her temper were largely accountable for the unhappiness of the association, it is fair to assume there were corresponding faults of temper on his side. If he was not qualified to make any woman happy for long, Mary

Wollstonecraft was not a woman to live happily with any man for any long time. There can be no question they were an ill-assorted couple; but with any man Mary would have been unhappily matched. It is not wonderful that Imlay had not been associated for many months with the woman, who worried him incessantly with her temper, before he began to think of withdrawing from the association.

In leaving Mary Wollstonecraft, Imlay took a step that, from the commencement of their association, must have been foreseen as a probable contingency by the woman, who regarded love as the most evanescent of the human passions. In leaving her he merely exercised the right of retirement, which had been reserved alike to him and her by the conditions of their lawless contract. Yet his disposition to leave her was no sooner known to the Free Lovers of her English acquaintance, than they began to think very ill of him. On being assured of his purpose to quit her, because he could not live harmoniously with her, they were quick in declaring him a prodigy of conjugal faithlessness. It is not manifest at the first glance why these enthusiastic advocates of the Free Contract were so indignant with him for retiring from the partnership in accordance with the terms on which he had entered it,—*i.e.* on the understanding that he should be at liberty to get out of it when he pleased, and that Mary should be at liberty to retire from it when she pleased. The advantage claimed by the Free Lovers for their conjugal arrangement over marriage is, that spouses have this liberty of withdrawing from one another on the death of their mutual affection. Why, then, was Imlay so severely blamed for using the liberty especially reserved to him by the contract he formed with Mary,—by the terms that may be fairly called her own terms? The Free Lovers spoke of him as though, instead of entering into a contract of Free Love with a middle-aged (thirty-four years old) woman, who was a Free Lover in principle before she knew him, he had engaged the affections of a young girl, and lured her into lawful wedlock. They stigmatized him as the heartless betrayer of virginal simplicity and innocence. They charged him with monstrous wickedness in retiring from the contract, which by their own rule he was free to withdraw from as soon as he liked.

The fact is the Free Lovers of ninety years since were angry with Imlay for leaving Mary, *not* because he acted in violation

of their principles or broke the terms of his contract with Mary, but because his rupture with the woman of letters afforded a strong example of the badness of their conjugal method, and tended to discredit their substitute for lawful marriage. The opponents of Free Love were and are in the habit of insisting that libertines would use its freedom, to desert their conjugal mates for slight causes. Imlay's secession from Mary countenanced this view of Free Love. The opponents of Free Love opposed it on the ground that, if conjugal partnerships could be withdrawn from at pleasure, they would be entered into lightly and without due preliminary inquiry and forethought. The levity with which Mary entered into a contract of Free Love with Imlay, soon after making his acquaintance, and before she learnt his real character (as her friends insist), countenanced this view. Hence the rage of the Free Lovers against Imlay, who retired from the partnership, whilst Mary wished to retain him in it.

Though it seems to have revived some months later, and after its temporary extinction to have regained all its original passionateness, it is not to be imagined that Mary Wollstonecraft's love of Gilbert Imlay continued to burn steadily after the death of his affection for her. All the more instructive and pathetic are the efforts she made, for her child's sake, and her own honour's sake, to hold him to herself, for months after his first manifestation of a desire to be quit of her. Striving to make herself useful to him, in the hope that a care for his selfish interests would retain him in the partnership from which he wished to retreat, she took an interest in his commercial concerns, and went on the voyage to Denmark and Norway, not more for the sake of her own health, than for the advantage of his affairs in those countries. This she did (as Mr. Kegan Paul says) after 'Imlay's affection had ceased, and his desertion' (retirement would be a better word) 'had practically begun.' Striving to be useful to him, she tried to please him, even feigned still to love him, though strong affection for him had perished from her heart. To qualify her to do business for him in the foreign lands for which she was bound, Imlay gave her a power-of-attorney, in which he styled her 'Mary Imlay, my best friend and wife,'—'a document,' says Mr. Kegan Paul, 'which in many cases and countries would be considered as constituting marriage:' as though it gave the poor woman a colour of

matronly honour in history, and were somehow or other a proof that she had, from the commencement of the Free Love contract, 'considered herself his wife in the eyes of God and man.' No doubt the document would have been proof of marriage in Scotland to this century, and in other countries previous to the Council of Trent. But Imlay and Mary were not living in Scotland. Nor were they living in times prior to the Council of Trent. The power-of-attorney was signed by Imlay when he had made up his mind never to make her his wife; and she took it abroad with her, when she knew he had ceased to love her and had *not* made her his wife. For those who peruse them, by the light of the hints given in these and previous pages, there is pathetic instruction in the letters Mary sent her no-longer-loving 'protector' from abroad. They are the letters of a woman alternately hoping against hope to revive in Imlay's breast his old love of her, and despairing to hold him much longer as a friend or even as an acquaintance. From pity, kindness or self-interest (possibly from all three) he wrote to her sometimes in the language of a lover,—letters animating her with hopes, to be dashed by the next post. Returning to England (not in late autumn, as Mr. Kegan Paul asserts, but) on 4th October, 1795, she soon found the vanity of all her hopes and efforts to retain him. By this time Imlay had formed another attachment, had entered into another contract of Free Love,—a fact all the more galling to Mary, because he called his new passion a sacred passion, and justified it with the familiar arguments of the Free Lovers. Resolute to exercise his Free-Love right to retire from the association that had become distasteful to him, he was set on fulfilling the moral engagements of the new partnership in mutual tenderness. His language and tone on these matters were the more exasperating to Mary, because of their conformity to the doctrines of her own philosophic school. In justice to him it must be admitted, even by Mary's partisans, that he showed no wish to shirk the pecuniary sacrifices, expected from a man of honour, when he transfers his affections from an old to a new mistress. Offering her, pressing upon her, money for her necessities, he undertook to make proper settlements on Mary and her child. With proper spirit she rejected indignantly these offers for herself, though she consented to his proposal to make a settlement on their child. But the bond he gave for

this purpose was of no advantage to the child, as neither the principal nor interest of the promised sum was paid ; probably because the man of divers financial speculations fell into poverty.

There are passages in the concluding Letters to Imlay fit to be given in evidence that, as the hour of their final separation drew nearer, Mary's love for him revived and regained all its former force ; and it is conceivable that, under the influence of jealousy of the object of Imlay's new attachment, Mary loved him again in a wild, tempestuous way, as all hope of recovering him to herself and her child died in her breast. Certainly she acted like a woman driven to distraction by the anguish of despised and disappointed love. On the other hand, she did nothing more than many a violent woman has done under the goadings and torture of wounded vanity and injured pride. In her rage and misery, Gilbert Imlay's whilom mate in Free-Love went one cold and dismal winter's day to the river's side near Putney Bridge. On coming to the scene, where she intended to escape from life, she either walked into the river and stood in it, or walked on the Bridge in the pouring rain, until the skirts of her clothing were saturated and heavily charged with water. This having been done, so that a few minutes later her garments should operate as a dead weight in drawing her beneath the tide's surface, and, at the same time, deprive her limbs of the power to struggle against the cold current, she climbed the parapet of the Bridge,* and threw herself into the deep stream. This deliberate attempt at self-murder was, however, unsuccessful, Mary being picked up and saved by the watermen of a passing boat.

Self-murder being a form of wickedness denied by the moral and social proprieties to all persons in their minds, not belonging

* The authorities differ respecting these preliminary measures ; some saying that she deliberately walked into the low water, whilst others represent that she walked on the Bridge in the rain, in order that her dress should be soaked and weighted with water, before she took the leap to death. Godwin's account in the *Memoirs* is :—' The rain suggested to her the idea of walking up and down on the Bridge till her clothes were thoroughly drenched and heavy with the wet, which she did for half an hour, without meeting a human being. She then leaped from the top of the Bridge, but still seemed to find a difficulty in sinking, which she endeavoured to counteract by pressing her clothes closely round her ;'—an account for which the writer may be assumed to have had Mary Wollstonecraft's authority.

to the lower orders, and being, therefore, a departure from righteousness that would disqualify Mary for her place of honour in the annals of a respectable county family, it has been decreed by Mary Wollstonecraft's admirers that she was out of her right mind, to the extent of not knowing what she was doing when she thus attempted to kill herself. Is it not written in Mr. Kegan Paul's book that Mary's attempt to drown herself was made when she was 'driven to despair and was for a time quite out of her mind?' In connexion with this verdict, it is well to remember that, some time before going down to Putney, Mary wrote a very powerfully worded letter to Imlay, saying therein, 'I go to find comfort, and my only fear is, that my poor body will be insulted by an endeavour to recall my hated existence. But I shall plunge into the Thames, where there is the least chance of my being snatched from the death I seek.' After writing this quite lucid and well-worded letter, Mary went down to Putney; and, after providing in the most deliberate manner for the achievement of her purpose, she climbed over the side of the Bridge and threw herself into the deep water. When she did all this she was so completely out of her mind, that she should not be deemed accountable for her actions, and cognizant of what she was doing. This is Mr. Kegan Paul's view of the matter.

It is impossible to trace precisely the course of Mary Wollstonecraft's life in the last three months of 1795 and the first month of 1796 (from the stormy, hysterical, changeful epistles, that conclude the series of published *Letters* to Imlay, and other letters of the same period, which I have examined for the illustration of her story); but in December she was still writing to him with a faint, flickering hope of recalling him to her side. On some day of December, subsequent to the 8th of that month, she wrote to him in these words:—

'Imlay, believe me, it is not romance, you have acknowledged to me feelings of this kind. You could restore me to life and hope, and the satisfaction you would feel would amply repay you. In tearing myself from you, it is my own heart I pierce; and the time will come, when you will lament that you have thrown away a heart that, even in the moment of passion, you cannot despise. I would owe everything to your generosity, but, for God's sake, keep me no longer in suspense! Let me see you once more.'

This letter is followed by another, written in the same

month, ending with 'I part with you in peace.' But the final parting was still later. Even so late as 26th January, 1796, she is writing to Mr. A. Hamilton Rowan in terms which indicate a faint, lingering hope that even yet Imlay would at some time of the future, change and return to her. 'Mr. Imlay,' she says, 'would be glad to supply all my pecuniary wants; but unless he returns to himself, I would perish first;'—words showing that, even so late as the last week of January, 1796, she could think of what she would do if Imlay should return to himself, *i.e.* to her.

Mary Wollstonecraft's daughter by William Godwin, the daughter who lived to be Mrs. Shelley and mother of the present Sir Percy Florence Shelley, was born on 30th August, 1797, just five calendar months after the marriage (celebrated at old St. Pancras Church, on 29th March, 1797), that united the author of *The Rights of Woman* and the author of *Political Justice* in lawful wedlock, when they had already been living several months together in Free Love. The date of the commencement of their association in Free Love is unknown; but whilst it must have been as far back as December, 1796, there is reason for thinking the free-contract was entered into some weeks earlier. It follows, therefore, that the woman who leapt from Putney Bridge in the winter of 1795-6, and had not absolutely despaired, on 26th January, 1796, of seeing her Free Lover Imlay return to himself and her, in something much less than a year, probably in so short a time as nine months, possibly in a much shorter time than nine months, was living in Free Love with her old friend William Godwin,—who was in his forty-first year when he thus took Mary Wollstonecraft Imlay, *ætat.* thirty-seven, under his protection.

An extant note shows that Godwin met Mary Wollstonecraft, or, at least, accepted an invitation to meet her, at the residence of their common friend, Miss Hayes, in January, 1796; and there is reason to believe that the appointment agreed to by this note of acceptance was the first occasion on which Godwin met Mary Wollstonecraft since her return from Norway. That their acquaintance was of much older standing, and had been much more fruitful of intercourse, than Mr. Kegan Paul represents, and Mrs. Shelley imagined, is certain. That Godwin now renewed his acquaintance with her under circumstances, disposing him to think far more favourably of her than he had

heretofore done, is also certain. On meeting her again in 1796, the philosopher, who had made her a Free Lover, recognized a martyr to his anti-matrimonial doctrines in the woman, whom he had some four years earlier regarded as too talkative and eager for admiration. Bound, by his principles, to approve the terms of her association with Imlay, he could not withhold his sympathy from a woman who had suffered so severely from her devotion to Free Love doctrine. Approaching her as a fair disciple, who had suffered for the truth's sake, and for the cause of which he was the chief living representative and vindicator, he desired to show his respect for her, and to comfort her. 'I found a wounded heart; as that heart cast itself upon me, it was my ambition to heal it,' he wrote to her soon after their lawful marriage, in reference to the renewal of their acquaintance. They are notable words: indicating, as they do, who made the first advances to the state of mutual regard, that resulted in their marriage. He found in her what he was prepared to find—a wounded heart. The owner of the wounded heart cast herself on the philosopher, who desired to soothe its sorrow.

Recalling their course from friendship to love, Godwin wrote after her death:—

'The partiality we conceived for each other was in that mode which I have always considered as the purest and most refined style of love. It grew with equal advances in the mind of each. It would have been impossible for the most minute observer to have said who was before and who was after. One sex did not take the priority which long-established custom has awarded it, nor the other overstep that delicacy which is so severely imposed. I am not conscious that either party can assume to have been the agent or the patient, the toil spreader or the prey, in this affair. When, in the course of things, the disclosure came, there was nothing, in a manner, for either party to disclose to the other. . . . There was no period of throes and resolute explanation attendant on the tale. It was friendship melting into love.'

Though in the privacy of the domestic circle a husband may sometimes jocularly charge his wife with having made the first advances to the offer, or even the offer itself, that resulted in their marriage, no man of common self-respect, or with the slightest care for his wife's reputation, could seriously assure the public, she so far 'overstept the delicacy which is so severely imposed' on her sex, as to have pursued him and

dragged him into marriage, or even to have given him any kind of intimation that she required an offer of marriage from him. The more remarkable, therefore, is it, that in words, written with a view to publication, whilst expressly guarding his former wife from the imputation of any such indelicacy, Godwin states so positively that the first advances from their friendship to love were not made by him alone; that his suit for affection in no degree preceded hers; that in the progress to warmer feeling they moved together step by step. This historic statement, made for the world's consideration, must be read in conjunction with the serious statement put on paper for her eye alone:—‘I found a wounded heart. As that heart cast itself upon me, it was my ambition to heal it.’ Here is the statement of the whole case. Godwin's expressions of sympathy caused the ever-impetuous, and often too demonstrative woman to throw herself on his sympathy; his ambition to heal her wounded heart was preceded by her display of feeling. Few readers of the two statements will question that, notwithstanding what Godwin says to the contrary, the first advances were made with unmistakable significance by the lady.

Passing in this manner from Imlay to Godwin, in less than a year from her final separation from the former, Mary Wollstonecraft was living with the latter in Free Love at his house in The Polygon, Somers Town, in the last month of 1796. So living with him, was she (to use Mr. Kegan Paul's words) a wife in the eyes of God and man? She certainly was not so in the eyes of man. She and Godwin had lived in this manner for weeks, for months, before any clear announcement of the nature of their intimacy was made to their most intimate friends. People who had the *entrée* of the little house in Somers Town, gossiped together,—asking one another what it meant. Had Godwin, in his compassion for Mary's forlorn condition, merely brought her to his house as a guest for a long visit, or as a house-keeper, or in a closer and more affectionate relation? What the various gossips said, and how they said it, may be left to the reader's imagination. In February, 1797, Mary Wollstonecraft, living as the somehow or other mistress of Godwin's house in The Polygon, entertained her sister Everina for some time; but so far was she from considering herself a wife in the eyes of man, she did not venture to reveal the nature of her position in the house even to her own sister. Throughout her visit in ‘The

Polygon,' Everina was kept in the dark, and she went off to her place of governess in the Wedgwood family, at Etruria, without having learnt that her sister and Godwin were living in Free Love. In the following month (March, 1797), Southey, whilst in London, saw Mary Wollstonecraft, and on the 13th of that month wrote of her to Cottle:—

'Of all the lions or *literati* I have seen here, Mary Imlay's countenance is the best, infinitely the best; the only fault in it is an expression somewhat similar to what the prints of Horne Tooke display,—an expression indicating superiority; not haughtiness, not sarcasm, in Mary Imlay, but still it is unpleasant. Her eyes are light brown, and although the lid of one of them is affected by a little paralysis, *they* are the most meaning I ever saw.'

Speaking of the Free Love association as marriage, Mr. Kegan Paul says that its existence was 'understood' in Godwin's circle at the date of Southey's letter to Cottle. Doubtless Godwin's circle 'understood' what was going on in his house; but the understanding was in no way due to Godwin's communicativeness. The understanding was the result of vigilant observation, surmise, inference, conjecture, gossip, tattle. The association was a sly, furtive, secret, deceptive business till the legal but secret marriage in old St. Pancras Church on 29th March, 1797, and for some days afterwards. How uncertain the 'understanding' was, how far some of Godwin's closest friends felt that after all they might be mistaken in the 'understanding,' appears from the fact, that, in his reply to the letter in which Godwin briefly announced his recent marriage in St. Pancras Church without mentioning the lady's name, so intimate a friend as Holcroft wrote, 'I cannot be mistaken concerning the woman you have married. It is Mrs. W. Your secrecy a little pains me.'

How did the marriage, into which Godwin sneaked in this fashion, turn out? Was it, during its short course, a happy marriage? Was its tenour such as to justify an opinion that it would, on the whole, have been a happy union, had Mary's life been prolonged for another ten or twenty years? Mr. Kegan Paul answers these questions confidently in the affirmative. Gushing over Mary's untimely end, he speaks of Godwin's life as blighted by her death. It is therefore needful to state clearly, that brief though it was, the marriage was by no means a happy union, and that it was fruitful of incidents which at

least make it certain that Godwin would have found Mary Wollstonecraft a very difficult woman to live with, had her days been so prolonged. This stands out clearly on the record.

No sooner had Mary Wollstonecraft carried the point, for which she may be assumed to have played steadily from the moment of her discovery that she was likely to have another child; no sooner had she induced Godwin, at a great sacrifice of his doctrine against matrimony, to take her to old St. Pancras Church, than she gave the reins to her unhappy temper, and began to worry him precisely as she had in former time worried Imlay. No more than three weeks had passed since that marriage, when she spoke to Godwin (certainly no inconsiderate and unkindly man; certainly a husband who had given proof of his wish to render her a happy woman) in such a strain, that he retired in acute distress from his house in The Polygon to his quite needful retreat in Evesham Buildings (or Place; it is described in both ways). From the study, with which he had fortunately provided himself, he wrote his wife a brief and pathetic note,—averring that he had studied her happiness in everything; imploring her to act so that he should not be wholly disappointed in her; and reminding her that he had not undertaken to heal her wounded heart until she had cast herself upon him.

Admitting that during their brief married life Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft had several lively quarrels; and admitting that they arose from her 'extreme sensitiveness and eager quickness of temper,' Mr. Kegan Paul requires us to consider the outbreaks of her passionate querulousness as nothing more serious than 'slight clouds.' How differently the biographer speaks of the second Mrs. Godwin's similar exhibitions of ill-temper! Slight clouds! What a pretty phrase for an ugly fact. Anyhow they were clouds no less significant than slight. It must have been a dismally significant cloud that caused Godwin to write her such a letter!

Let the reader consider the particulars of one of this angelical Mary's exhibitions of ill-temper; an affair mentioned lightly by Mr. Kegan Paul as a 'little outburst.' In the June of 1797, Godwin (a man with a right to a short summer's holiday, if ever a hard-working man had a right to one) went for a driving tour of just two weeks and three days in the company of his particular friend Mr. Basil Montagu.

Hiring a horse and gig, they drove through parts of Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, and Warwickshire, into Staffordshire, visiting Beaconsfield, Oxford, Birmingham, and Stafford, in the earlier days of the excursion; and in the closing days of the brief vacation taking peeps at Derby, Coventry, and Cambridge. Let it be borne in mind that the tour was made in times long before the country was covered with telegraph wires, and when country towns had not three or four postal departures and deliveries a-day. Also, be it remembered, that Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft had mated on the understanding, that they should not have too much of one another's company, or pester one another with incessant attentiveness. It had been arranged that Godwin, an early riser, should go from his bed in The Polygon to his study in Evesham Buildings at an early hour, and in the ordinary way of his life should not after leaving bed see Mary before their four-o'clock dinner. It had been arranged between them that each should be free to go into society without the other, going by themselves to different parties, going apart on the same evenings to different theatres, or to different parts of the same theatre. Settled even to minute particulars had it been that they should show their superiority to ordinary husbands and wives, by doing what they liked, and exacting no petty services from one another. Free in their love they would be free in their lives.

Driving out of London for this tour on Saturday, 3rd June, Godwin returned to London on Tuesday, 20th June, having in the interval written his wife six long letters. He wrote to his wife on the 5th, 7th, 10th, 12th, 15th, and 17th of June. The letters were no brief and hasty notes; they were long letters of bright, cheery chat, and affectionate gossip; letters showing he thought much of her during his absence from her, and wished to make her by means of his pen the sharer of his enjoyments. All these long letters came to Mary's hands; and she knew he was not a rapid writer, capable of dashing off a long epistle in twenty minutes. There had been no hour or day fixed upon precisely for his return, though the tour had been spoken of beforehand as a fortnight's 'outing.' Time having been lost by unforeseen accidents and *contretemps*, as time is apt to be lost in such trips, Godwin (the husband who, by special agreement, was to retain as much as possible of his bachelor freedom after marriage) stayed out three days longer than his wife expected. He did not return

to The Polygon on Saturday night ; Mary fretted all Sunday. He did not return on Sunday night ; Mary went to bed to fret and fume over his cruel neglect of her. Rising on Monday with a clouded brow, she spent the day musing over her wrongs, and resolving on measures to preserve herself from such inhuman treatment in the future. On Monday night (whilst the cup of Godwin's iniquity was only two-thirds full) she wrote her husband a piece of her mind in a letter to catch his eye and conscience either on his arrival at his own door, or at his last resting-place on his homeward way. To see the angelic Mary in one of her tantrums, readers should refer to Mr. Kegan Paul's book, and peruse this letter, dated 'June 19th, Monday, almost 12 o'clock.' Though absence had, for a while, quickened her affection for him, coldness and neglect had diminished it. The letters he had sent her might serve to remind him where he had been, but they were no mementos of love for her to value. If tenderness for her had animated him on his departure from town, it had evaporated during his trip. Though she had requested him to let her know beforehand the time of his return, he had tormented her by keeping her in suspense. Godwin having written to her copiously about the people he had seen in his brief tour, it seemed well to the amiable Mary to charge him with being influenced by 'the homage of vulgar minds.' In waiting to see a show at Coventry, instead of hastening back to Somers Town, he had offered her an affront. What had happened on the way that it took him from Saturday to Sunday night to make the journey from Coventry to Cambridge ? And now he was still away, though it was near midnight. What want of consideration for her feelings ! 'Unless,' wrote the angry woman, 'you suppose me to be a stick or stone, you must have forgot to think as well as to feel, since you have been on the wing.'

This 'little outburst' did not, we are assured by Mr. Kegan Paul, affect the cordial affection of the husband and wife. One would like to hear Godwin on that point. What a letter for him to receive from the woman he had so recently married ! What a selfish, exacting, unendurable virago ! Yet the Shelleyan zealots commend her for her womanly goodness and sweetness ; insisting that she appeared on earth to 'gild humanity with a ray,' &c., and that Godwin's life was darkened and lowered to its last hour by her death.

Before we pass on to pay our respects to the second Mrs. Godwin, it is well to notice what is said of the marriage of the first Mrs. Godwin by her daughter (Mrs. Shelley), whose statements respecting her mother and husband are too generally accepted as authoritative in the Shelleyan coteries. In Mrs. Shelley's fanciful account of her mother's virtues, which are declared 'to gild humanity with a ray, &c.,' it is thus written:—

'Godwin met her at a moment when she was deeply depressed by the ingratitude of one utterly incapable of appreciating her excellence; who had stolen her heart, and availed himself of her excessive and thoughtless generosity, and lofty independence of character, to plunge her in difficulties and then desert her. Difficulties, worldly difficulties, indeed, she set at nought. It was at this time that Godwin again met her at the house of her friend Miss Hayes, having done so occasionally before she went to Norway.'

Further, in a note on the marriage of her parents, Mrs. Shelley says—

'At the beginning of this year (1797) Mr. Godwin married Mary Wollstonecraft. The precise date is not known; he does not mention it in his journal, and the ceremony had taken place some time before the marriage was declared. This secrecy partly arose from a slight shrinking on Mr. Godwin's part from avowing that he had acted in contradiction to his theories. They both however looked on this sort of struggle, in which they had been born, and had always lived, as a very secondary matter, and after a short period of deliberation they, in the month of April, declared the marriage which had before been solemnized.'

(1.) By difficulties, worldly difficulties, Mrs. Shelley obviously means 'pecuniary difficulties.' However ill people may think of Imlay's treatment of Mary Wollstonecraft, it must be admitted that Imlay did not leave her without wishing and seeking to free her from immediate pecuniary difficulties and to put her in easy circumstances for the moment. She showed proper spirit in refusing to take money of him under the circumstances; but as he offered it, he cannot be fairly charged with selfish indifference to the difficulties.

(2.) Mrs. Shelley does not say how long it was before her mother's departure for Norway, when Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft had occasional meetings at Miss Hayes's house. Nor does she actually say that Godwin saw Mary Wollstonecraft for the first time at one of those meetings. But her words are

calculated to give, and have given, the impression that Godwin met Mary Wollstonecraft for the first time shortly before her departure from London for Norway, in the summer of 1795. But this impression is erroneous. Thomas Paine escaped from England to France in September, 1792, and never revisited his native country. He was present on the occasion when Godwin, in London, met Mary Wollstonecraft for the first time, and was displeased with her loquaciousness and apparent desire to engross Paine's attention. This meeting, therefore, must have taken place before September, 1792. There is also other evidence that Mary Wollstonecraft knew William Godwin before she went to France.

(3.) As he was not 'acting in contradiction to his theories,' whilst living in Free Love with Mary Wollstonecraft, it is obvious that Mrs. Shelley's words, touching the marriage of her parents, refer to their lawful marriage. Mrs. Shelley says this marriage was solemnized at the beginning of 1797. She is wrong; for the marriage was solemnized at Old St. Pancras Church on 29th March, 1797.

(4.) Mrs. Shelley says of this marriage, 'the precise date is not known.' She is wrong. The precise date may not have been known to Mrs. Shelley, but it was known to other people,—to all people who had taken sufficient trouble to inquire about the matter. There never could have been any uncertainty respecting the place of the wedding; for both Godwin and Mary were well known to be inhabitants of St. Pancras parish at the time of the event. To ascertain the precise date it was, therefore, only needful to search the parish register.

(5.) Mrs. Shelley says of this marriage, 'the ceremony had taken place some time before the marriage was declared' in April; leaving the reader to infer that three months elapsed between the performance and the publication of the ceremony. She is wrong. The marriage was announced to Godwin's most intimate friends within a few days of the performance of the ceremony. Holcroft acknowledged on 6th April, 1797, the announcement made to him by Godwin of what had taken place at Old St. Pancras Church on 29th March, 1797.

(6.) Speaking of the secrecy of the marriage, Mrs. Shelley says, 'This secrecy partly arose from a slight shrinking on Mr. Godwin's part from avowing that he had acted in contradiction to his theories;' readers being thereby led to infer that Godwin

kept the marriage a secret from the beginning of the year till April, from reluctance to avow an act so inconsistent with his theories. Mrs. Shelley is wrong. Instead of postponing the announcement for three months from such a cause, her father announced the marriage within a few days of its solemnization.

(7.) Still writing as though what occurred on 29th March had taken place at the beginning of the year, Mrs. Shelley says,—

‘Another cause for the secrecy at first maintained was the stern law of poverty and necessity. My father narrowly circumscribed both his receipts and disbursements. The maintenance of a family had never been contemplated, and could not at once be provided for. My mother, accustomed to a life of struggle and poverty, was so beloved by her friends, that several, and Mr. Johnson in particular, had stood between her and any of the annoyances and mortifications of debt. But this must cease when she married.’

In other words, according to Mrs. Shelley, her father kept his marriage a secret from the beginning of the year till April, in order that he might derive advantage from money, given to Mary Wollstonecraft by Mr. Johnson and other friends, under the impression that she was a single woman with no husband to maintain her; which money they would not have given her, had they known of her marriage. This is what Mrs. Shelley says of William Godwin. What baseness for a daughter to attribute to her own father, and put on record against him! I wish I could say that nothing in Godwin’s life, till his powers languished under increasing embarrassments, countenances the opinion that he was capable of such baseness. Unfortunately, however, there is evidence that, whilst Mary Wollstonecraft was living in secret Free Love with him in The Polygon, he prevailed on Mr. T. Wedgewood to lend him a considerable sum of money, saying, when he asked for the loan, that he did not want it for himself, but for the use of another person. As this other person was Mary Wollstonecraft, and as a contract of Free Love was marriage in Godwin’s opinion, the money he wanted for her use was money borrowed for his own use. Why did he not tell Mr. Wedgewood outright that he wanted it for Mary Wollstonecraft? Because he thought it possible that some rumour of his arrangement with Mary had come to Mr. Wedgewood, in which case the benevolent manufacturer, instead of lending the money, would say, ‘No, you must support your

own "bosom-friend." Why did he not tell Mr. Wedgewood that he was living in Free Love with Mary? For much the same reason; from a fear that, instead of lending the money, Mr. Wedgewood would say, 'No; for I see why you want the money, and I think you ought to keep your own wife.' Wedgewood lent the money in ignorance of the purpose for which it was needed.

After the declaration of his marriage Godwin confessed that he had wanted the money for Mary Wollstonecraft, and at the same time begged for a further loan of 50*l.*; saying, as he made this confession and prayer for further help, 'I trust you will not accuse me of duplicity in having told you that it was not for myself that I wanted your assistance.' Though he complied with the petition for another 50*l.*, Mr. Wedgewood cannot have acquitted his friend of duplicity in the former application. Hence it is certain that Godwin kept the Free Love contract a secret to one particular friend, lest by revealing it he should lessen his power to draw money from his own friend. It is, therefore, only too probable that he was guilty of the meanness attributed to him by his daughter, and also refrained from publishing the Free Love contract, lest the publication should lessen the readiness of Mary's friends to give her money. But though he was influenced by pecuniary considerations in keeping his relations with Mary Wollstonecraft a secret, it none the less remains that Mrs. Shelley was wrong in representing that he was moved by such considerations to keep his lawful marriage secret from the beginning of the year till April. As we have said more than once the marriage of 29th March, 1797, was declared in the first week of April.

How are these inaccuracies to be regarded?—as mistakes arising wholly or chiefly from misconception? or as deliberate untruths? Let us fix our attention on the two first misstatements; the assertion that the marriage was solemnized at the beginning of the year and the assertion that the date of the marriage was unknown. Did Mrs. Shelley make these misstatements innocently? in ignorance of the truth, or with a knowledge of the truth? It is not easy to believe that Mrs. Shelley, a woman of letters, curious about her mother's history, and in her later time engaged in biographical inquiries for the illustration of her husband's life, her own career, her father's life, and her mother's story, omitted to ascertain a fact so easily discovered,

as the date of her father's marriage. If she knew the date, she had obvious motives for putting the ugly fact out of sight, under specious and delusive verbiage. In her later time the woman, who in girlhood had been strangely lawless and defiant of the world's opinion, was chiefly desirous of clothing herself with respectability, of toning and colouring her story into accordance with the social condition of the family into which she had married. The woman who would fain have justified her husband's life to the world, was only a few degrees less desirous of rendering her own story the same service. What more natural than for such a woman to wish to cover up the ugly fact, that she was born only five calendar months after her mother's marriage? She could not tamper with the evidences of the date of her own birth. They were too numerous and too well known. But by pushing the date of her mother's marriage some two or three months back, she would cause the world to think her the child of a premature birth, who had entered the world none too soon for her mother's credit. By doing so, she may well have conceived herself discharging a filial duty, as well as a duty to herself and her husband's respectable family. She must have wished to think of herself as differing, in this respect, altogether from her base-born sister Fanny, who committed suicide whilst still young. She must have shrunk from the thought that, had it not been for so late a marriage as the one which preceded her own birth by only five months, she would have resembled her sister Fanny in being a bastard. Hence, whilst it is not easy to think her ignorant of the real date of her mother's marriage, her motive for wilfully misstating the case is obvious. Thus much on the assumption that the main inaccuracy was a deliberate untruth.

It is, however, just conceivable that she did not know the date of her mother's marriage, and had a sincere belief that it occurred somewhere about the beginning of 1797. This belief may have been due to words spoken to her by Mrs. Gisborne, who, her friend in Italy, had been her mother's friend in the previous century. She may even have gone to the St. Pancras registry, and paid fees to the registrar for searching for evidence of the marriage amongst the records of marriages, solemnized in the parish in the later months of 1796 and the first month of 1797. She may have taken some, though insufficient, pains to arrive at the evidence of the marriage, and imagined herself to

have taken all possible pains, and come to the conclusion that she might honestly write of her mother's marriage, 'the precise date is unknown.'

Even so, though she would be innocent of wilful falsehood, she would remain guilty of writing positively on a mere assumption (a serious fault in an historian), and offering her readers as sure facts a series of inferences from a mere assumption, or a belief unsustained by positive testimony. Her narrative of her parents' marriage, if not a tissue of untruths, would remain a thing made up of inaccuracies. It is important for readers to bear this in mind, whilst and *after* reading this book. Mrs. Shelley did not die without leaving much biographical material behind her in the shape of printed notes to her husband's works, and also in the shape of MS. notes and memoranda for the use of future historians;—stuff that would have appeared in her justificatory *Memoir* of her husband, had not Sir Timothy checked her biographical zeal by the stern order, 'Silence, or no allowance!' But on being brought under critical scrutiny, all the passages, and bits, and scraps of her biographical sketches, at present before the world, are found so curiously inaccurate, that every one of her biographical statements should be read with nervous caution, lively suspicion, and watchful distrust, by those who would avoid error on matters of Shelleyan story.

I do not say she was an untruthful woman, though on some occasions she unquestionably rouses serious suspicion of her veracity. Like Lady Byron she enjoyed in her girlhood a reputation for sincerity of speech. But people often say things that are untrue without intending to be untruthful. It was often so with Mrs. Shelley, in some degree before her husband's death, and in a greater degree after that event. An imaginative and highly emotional woman, she sometimes saw things in a wrong light. Not seldom, her mental vision was affected by the delusive media of sentimentality or anger, through which it regarded matters that stirred her feelings. In speaking of herself she was sometimes strongly influenced by romantic egotism. Affection and combativeness combined to render her an unreliable witness about matters touching her husband's honour. Resembling Lady Byron in being a vehement and steady hater, she from her girlhood cordially disliked her step-mother, and after loving her sister Claire with the romantic fervour described in the *Real Lord Byron*, came to detest her

almost as cordially as Lady Byron, long after Byron's death, detested her sister-in-law. All that she said or wrote to the discredit of her step-mother and sister-by-affinity should be received with extreme caution, and large allowance for her animosity against them.

CHAPTER III.

THE SECOND MRS. WILLIAM GODWIN.

The Blighted Being—Miss Jones's Disappointment—The Blighted Being goes to Bath—He proposes to Miss Harriet Lee—Is rejected by Mrs. Reveley—Is accepted by Mary Jane Clairmont—Who was she?—Her Children by her first Marriage—Their Ages in 1801—Points of Resemblance in Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Jane Clairmont—The Blighted Being marries Mary Jane Clairmont—Mr. Kegan Paul's serious Misrepresentations of Claire's Age—The Use made of this Misrepresentation—Mr. Kegan Paul convicted by his own Evidences—Charles Clairmont's Boyhood—Godwin's Regard for his second Wife—Misrepresentations touching the second Mrs. Godwin—Childhood of Mary and Claire—Education of Godwin's Children and Step-children—Charles Clairmont's Introduction to Free Thought—Godwin's Care to withhold Mary from Free Thought—She is reared in Ignorance of her Mother's Story—The Book-shop in Hanway Street—The Godwins of The Polygon—Their Migration to the City—The Godwins of Skinner Street.

By Mary Wollstonecraft's death, Godwin was left with two motherless infants on his hands,—Fanny Imlay, three years and from four to five months old, and Mary, just ten days old. According to Mr. Kegan Paul, he was also left with a blighted existence. Let us see what Godwin did with his blighted existence in the years immediately following Mary Wollstonecraft's death. For some time the infants in The Polygon, Somers Town, were cared for by Miss Louisa Jones, who would fain have become the step-mother of Mary Wollstonecraft's legitimate child, and the tender guardian of Fanny.

Miss Jones, however, was not allowed to settle herself for life in this manner; for though he saw the necessity of finding a mother for the children, the widower with a blighted existence did not think highly of Miss Louisa.

Mary Wollstonecraft had been just six months in her grave; when the blighted being determined to woo one of the two Misses Lee, of Bath,—Sophia and Harriet Lee, daughters of John Lee, the Covent Garden actor, and authors of *The Canterbury Tales*; who, as writers with many readers, and school-

mistresses with a flourishing seminary for young ladies, were notable personages in the City of Health and Invalids. Going to Bath in March, 1798, Godwin saw enough of Miss Harriet Lee, on four different occasions, to resolve on laying siege (by letters from London) to her mature affections. In April 1798 Miss Harriet Lee received the first of the letters from London, that were intended to induce her to dissolve partnership with her sister, and enter into a different kind of partnership with the author of *Political Justice*. Barely seven months had passed since Mary Wollstonecraft's death, when her former and inconsolable husband is making love to another woman. This seems quick work for a blighted being. Is it usual for a blighted being to think of re-marriage so soon after bereavement? If so, blighted beings do not deserve more compassion than other widowers. But the suit was unsuccessful. There were several things to make Miss Harriet Lee think thrice before accepting William Godwin. There was his strong writing against the honourable estate into which he desired to lure Miss Harriet Lee; there was the unpleasant rumour that he had lived for months in Free Love with Mary Wollstonecraft; there were Mary Wollstonecraft's two infants in The Polygon, Somers Town. Moreover, as a gentlewoman of elegant letters and a respectable schoolmistress, Mrs. Harriet Lee may have been prejudiced against the man who had admired the author of the *Rights of Woman*. Miss Harriet Lee thought thrice; and in August, 1798, the author of *Political Justice* knew he must look elsewhere for a step-mother to his little daughter.

What next with the blighted being? One of the most unpleasant of the several ladies, with whom Shelley associated in Italy, was a certain Mrs. Gisborne, whilom Mrs. Reveley, of whom he wrote to Peacock in August, 1819 (giving her a character not more applicable to her in her advanced middle age than in 1799):—'Mrs. Gisborne is a sufficiently amiable and very accomplished woman; she is *δημοκρατικη* and *αθην*—how far she may *φιλανθρωπη* I don't know, for she is the antipodes of enthusiasm.' On 6th July, 1799, this gentlewoman lost her first husband, who died no long while after showing much uneasiness at her intimacy with the blighted being. Within a month of Mr. Reveley's death, Godwin pressed the widow to give him personal interviews, in order that he might show reason why she should hasten to become his wife;—a request

that was declined by the widow, who, though an atheist, a democrat, and a cold-blooded creature, had some faint notions of decency, and of what was due to the memory even of the husband with whom she had lived unhappily. Is it usual for a blighted being to behave in this way? In something more than a year from his wife's death to offer a married lady attention that stirs her husband to indignation, and in less than two years from the blighting bereavement to make an offer of marriage to this same lady, within a month of her husband's death? In the name of all the domestic affections, what is it to be a blighted being? What is blight of heart and life? It must surely be something that impels an inconsolable widower to make an offer of marriage to nearly every other woman who crosses his path.

Instead of marrying the man of blighted life, Mrs. Reveley in May, 1800, gave herself in marriage to Mr. Gisborne, whose Slawkenbergian nose is curiously associated with Shelley's own 'little turn-up nose;' her action in this matter being (Mr. Kegan Paul assures us) 'a severe blow to Godwin, who had never abandoned the hope he might overcome the lady's objections to a marriage with him!' Twelve months later (May 1801), the blighted being was in love with Mrs. Mary Jane Clairmont, *alias* Clermont, whom he married in the following December,—just four years and three months from the day of Mary Wollstonecraft's funeral.

My information respecting the second Mrs. William Godwin's first husband is slight and shadowy, though I have done my best to make it more substantial. There is reason to believe he was a bookseller; but my evidence on this point is not conclusive. If he was in 'the trade,' the fact would account for the second Mrs. Godwin's knowledge of printing and publishing matters, and of the confidence with which she urged Godwin to become a publisher of books for children. For the main purpose of this paragraph it is enough to say, that his surname is (as I remarked in the *Real Lord Byron*) variously spelt in Byronic and Shelleyan biography, and that one comes upon it in the fashion of Clermont, Claremont, Clairemont, and Charlemont, as well as Clairmont. For sufficient and obvious reasons, in the *Real Lord Byron* I spelt the name Clermont,—the spelling used in the British Museum Catalogue, for the reference to Claire's well-known letter to Byron, preserved in the Egerton MSS. For no less sufficient and obvious reasons I spell the

name in this chapter 'Clairmont,'—Godwin's way of spelling the name. Readers, therefore, must bear in mind that 'Jane Clairmont' and 'Jane Clermont' signify the same Claire (Mrs. Shelley's sister-by-affinity), who was Byron's mistress and the mother of Allegra.

By the Shelleyan apologists, who draw their inspiration from Field Place, the first Mrs. William Godwin and the second Mrs. William Godwin have been dealt with differently. It appearing to those apologists that to place Mary Wollstonecraft amongst the angels is to raise a presumption that the daughter of so pure and bright a spirit was also of angelical nature,—a presumption favourable to the poet and his family,—they have tortured the English language to make her into an angel. On the other hand, it appearing to the same apologists that to exhibit the second Mrs. Godwin as a harsh and odious step-mother is to justify Mary Godwin's desire to get away from so hateful a ruler, and even to palliate the young lady's conduct in running away to Switzerland with another woman's husband, they have tortured and strained the English language even more cruelly, to prove that the second Mrs. Godwin was a superlatively disagreeable woman. Being no partisan, the present writer declines either to think the first Mrs. Godwin an angel of grace, or to think the second Mrs. Godwin a very hateful person. Seeing that Mary Wollstonecraft had various faults, he sees that Mary Jane Clairmont had several imperfections. Whilst declining to join with the Shelleyan enthusiasts in glorifying Mary Wollstonecraft because her daughter Mary lived to be Shelley's second wife, and in decrying the second Mrs. Godwin for the advantage of her step-daughter's reputation, he is none the less disposed to think favourably of Mrs. Mary Jane (Clairmont) Godwin, because she cordially disapproved of the views about marriage, which Godwin had successively promulgated and abandoned.

In several important particulars the second Mrs. William Godwin resembled the first Mrs. William Godwin. A woman of considerable cleverness and some education, she was an industrious woman of letters. Cleverer with her pen at translation than in original writing, she was enthusiastic and decidedly well looking. Even by her arch-enemy, Mr. Kegan Paul, she is said to have been 'clever, enthusiastic, and *handsome*.' Having somewhat the advantage of Mary Wollstonecraft in

temper she resembled her in disposition. Both women were quick-tempered, captious, quarrelsome, given to imagine themselves slighted and to sulk. But the second Mrs. Godwin was by no means so violent and outrageous in wrath as Mary Wollstonecraft. In other respects Mary Jane had the advantage of Mary Wollstonecraft. In social reputation she was far superior to Mary Godwin's mother. Having never produced so scandalous a book as the *Rights of Women*, she had not lived in Free Love with two men or any man; she had never given birth to an illegitimate child; her name had never been discreditably associated with another woman's husband; nor had she ever thrown herself in a fit of white rage off Putney Bridge. On another point the advantage is with the second Mrs. Godwin. On mating with her Godwin matched *evenly*; whilst the unevenness of his match with Mary Wollstonecraft had been to his disadvantage. On coming to her childless husband Mary Wollstonecraft brought an illegitimate child in her arms. Godwin had *two* children to maintain, when Mary Jane Clairmont entered his house with a child on either hand.

In the spring of 1801 Mrs. Mary Jane Clairmont took possession of the tenement adjoining Godwin's house in The Polygon, Somers Town, bringing with her to the new home her little girl Jane (afterwards 'Claire'), at that time in her fourth or fifth year (older, perhaps, by a few months than little Mary Godwin), and her elder brother, who may be regarded as having been born on or about 4th June, 1795,—possibly on or about 4th June, 1796. My knowledge of the month in which the little boy (Charles Clairmont) was born came to me from a letter, dated 5th June, 1806, written to Mrs. Godwin (at Southend) by William Godwin, who says therein, 'Yesterday (was that right or wrong?) we kept Charles's birthday, though his mother was absent.' My information about the year of the boy's birth is less precise, but I put it in 1795. It is certain that he was older than his sister. On this point Mr. Kegan Paul has no doubt; if he had any I could remove it. Hence, at the time of Mrs. Clairmont's entry into the house adjoining Godwin's home in The Polygon, Somers Town, the ages of the four children of the two households stood thus:—(1) Fanny Imlay, b. April, 1794, *ætat.* just seven years; (2) Charles Clairmont, b. 4th June, 1795, *ætat.* five years and ten months; (3) Jane Clairmont, in her fourth (or possibly even in her fifth) year;

(4) Mary Godwin, b. 30th August, 1797, *ætat.* three years and some seven or eight months.

A great deal turns on the ages of these children. In their desire to whitewash Mary Godwin, and exhibit her as a worthy mate for so faultless a person as Shelley, the Shelleyan enthusiasts have discovered that she was much younger than Claire; the discovery being used as a reason why Mary's grand misdemeanour should be entered in the tale of Claire's offences, and why, instead of censuring Mary Wollstonecraft's daughter for running off with her friend's husband, we should be indignant with the mature Claire for not taking better care of her younger sister. It is well to inquire, whether the discovery, of which so much is made, is aught else than a misrepresentation.

Byron thought Mary and Claire were, within a few months, of the same age. Writing of them in 1820, in the famous *Observations*, he put the case thus ungrammatically, 'Neither of them were, in 1816, nineteen years old,'—*i.e.* in the months of 1816, which they passed chiefly in his society at Geneva. It may be observed that Byron, often an inaccurate, was sometimes an untruthful writer. But spite against Claire, with whom he was quarrelling bitterly in 1820, would have disposed him to exaggerate her age. Whilst habitually truthful people sometimes tell fibs, persons never too nice about the truth sometimes tell it. On this occasion Byron seems to have told the truth. He was right as to the age of Mary Godwin, who did not complete her nineteenth year till 30th August, 1816. He certainly was not far wrong about Claire's age.

What is said about Claire's age by Mr. Kegan Paul, who tells two different stories about it? 'This,' he says of Mrs. Clairmont and her coming to The Polygon (*vide* pp. 57, 58, vol. ii. of *William Godwin: his Friends and Contemporaries*), was a Mrs. Clairmont, a widow, with a son then at school, and one little daughter *somewhat older* than Fanny, who came to occupy the next house to Godwin in the Polygon.' The italics of two words of this quotation are mine. Farther on, in his book, when he comes to work on the discovery, so as to make it appear that Claire was much older than Mary, Mr. Kegan Paul (vol. ii., p. 213) says, 'Jane Clairmont was only at home for two nights during the six weeks Shelley spent in London. *She was several years older than Fanny*, and even then led a somewhat independent life apart from her mother and step-

father, presumably as a governess, since that was the occupation she afterwards followed in Italy, during the intervals of her residence with the Shelleys.' This extract (seven words of which I print in italics) refers to Shelley's stay in London in the October and November, 1812. It is made up of inaccuracies. (1) Claire, like Mary, was only fifteen years old. (2) She may have been a pupil-teacher in some school where she was being educated; but she was not living in independence of her stepfather and her mother. (3) She was not several years older than Fanny.

Several years older! First, Mr. Kegan Paul says *somewhat older*, and then *several years older*; the difference between the two expressions making the two passages tell two different stories. The purpose of the larger expression is obvious. Mr. Paul wishes us to think Claire several years older than Fanny Imlay, in order that we may think her very much Mary's superior, by the authority of age. Several years may mean anything from three or four years to ten or twelve. Let us put the expression at four years. Then, as Fanny (born in April, 1794) was already eighteen years old, Claire must, according to Mr. Kegan Paul, have been twenty-two years old in 1812, and must have been born at least as early as April, 1790. It follows, according to Mr. Kegan Paul, that Claire's brother, older than she, must have been born, at the latest, on 4th June, 1789,—might, indeed, be fairly taken as having been born a year earlier.

Charles Clairmont was therefore, according to Mr. Kegan Paul, rising twelve years old, when his mother came to her new house in the Polygon. Was he?

(1) In 1802, when Charles (according to Mr. Kegan Paul's statement) was thirteen years old, William Godwin is admitted by Mr. Kegan Paul to have taken much pains to put the boy into Christ's Hospital. Had Godwin succeeded in getting the admission, the boy would have been fourteen before he went into the school, where boys, eighty years since, used to be admitted, no less than now-a-days, in quite tender years. Is it probable Godwin would have sought for the admission when the boy was so old?

(2) As an admission in the Bluecoat School could not be got for the boy, we know from a letter, published in Mr. Kegan Paul's own book, that Charles Clairmont was sent to Charter-

house in the summer of 1805, and kept at his studies there for six years. 'I observed,' Godwin wrote to Mr. Fairley on 5th October, 1811, about the boy, 'that I had kept him for six years at the Charterhouse, one of our most celebrated schools, not without proportionable profit, and that he has since been several months under one of our most celebrated arithmeticians.' If Charles was born on 4th June, 1789, he was sixteen years old when he first entered the Charterhouse school, and twenty-two when he left it. Does Mr. Kegan Paul think this probable or possible?

(3) Let us take some more evidence from one of the letters, which Mr. Kegan Paul seems to have pitchforked into his book without reading them. On 5th June, 1806, William Godwin wrote about the boy (who had been naughty just before his birthday) to his wife at Southend, in these words:—

'Do not imagine that I took Charles into my good graces the moment your back was turned. So that I had only just time to forgive him for his birthday. I wish to impress you with the persuasion that he is infinitely more of a child, and to be treated as a child, than you imagine. Monday I sent him for a frank, and set all the children to write letters, though by his awkwardness the occasion was lost. The letter he then wrote, though I took some pains previously to work on his feelings, was the poorest and most soulless thing ever you saw. I then set him to learn the poem of "My Mother," in Darton's *Original Poetry*. I went upstairs to his bedside the night before you left us, that I might impress upon him the importance of not suffering you to depart in anger; but instead of understanding me at first, he, like a child, thought I was come to whip him, and with great fervour and agitation, begged I would forgive him.'

(4) Had he been born on 4th June, 1789, as we are asked to believe by Mr. Kegan Paul, Charles (a decidedly clever boy, who made a good position for himself in early manhood by his mental force) was just upon seventeen years old, when he was scolded and punished for being naughty,—was set to learn by heart 'My Mother' in Darton's *Original Poetry*, and was thrown into lively agitation by fear that his stepfather had come upstairs to whip him. Can Mr. Kegan Paul seriously believe that a clever boy of seventeen years would have cried out for forgiveness, and in childish alarm have begged his stepfather not to smack him?

(5) At the close of October, 1811, when, according to Mr. Kegan Paul, he was twenty-two years, Charles (the clever boy,

who was still a mere lad when he became a tutor in the Imperial family of Austria) was sent to Mr. Thomas Constable's publishing house for two years to learn business; it being arranged that the lad should receive a yearly salary of 15*l.*, to which his stepfather should add 30*l.* for his sufficient maintenance. Can Mr. Kegan Paul believe that this arrangement was made for so promising a young man when he was twenty-two years old?

(6) Now let us see how Charles's probable birthday of 4th June, 1795, fits in with the known dates of his story. Born on that day he would be seven years old in June, 1802; an age at which persons, wishing to get him into Christ's Hospital, would be on the look-out for a nomination. Born on that day he was ten years old in 1805, when he went for the first time to the Charterhouse,—a fit age (as matters went seventy years since) at which to send him into the school. Born on that day, he would be still ten years old, when he was scolded, set to learn 'My Mother,' and thrown into noisy agitation by fear of being whipt. Godwin's letter gives a picture of a rather childish boy of ten years, not of a young man seventeen years old. Born on that day, he would be sixteen, when he left school in 1811, and went as a clerk into the Edinburgh publishing-house. Let it be added (though more than enough has been said about the youngster's age) that the boy's letters, published in Mr. Kegan Paul's book of blunders, are enough to show him to have been six or seven years younger than the book-maker requires us to think him.

(7) Another piece of evidence touching Claire's age, taken from Mr. Kegan Paul's book. If she was born, as Mr. Kegan Paul would have us believe, no later than April, 1790, she was twenty-one years old in May, 1811. In that month of May, Mrs. Godwin went to Ramsgate for change of air, taking her stepdaughter, Mary, with her for the trip, whilst her own daughter Jane (Claire) remained in London with her father and Fanny Imlay. Writing from London to Mrs. Godwin at Ramsgate, on 18th May, 1811, William Godwin says:—

'I have just been into the next room to ask the children if they have any messages. They are both anxious to hear from you. *Jane says she hopes you stuck on the Goodwin Sands, and that the sailors frightened you a little.*'

This message from thirteen-years-old Jane was a piquant piece of sauciness from the child to her mamma. From a young

woman of twenty-one years it would have been a piece of silliness, that Godwin certainly would not have passed on to his wife, in order to heighten the enjoyment of her holiday. Enough surely has been said to satisfy readers that Byron was right in regarding Claire and Mary as girls of about the same age, *i.e.* as being both of them only eighteen years old when they were at Geneva in 1816; and that Mr. Kegan Paul is guilty of a serious error in making it seem that Claire was older than Mary by at least seven years and four months. Claire may have been older than Mary by some months; but she certainly was not older than Fanny by several years.

Repeating a piece of malicious domestic tattle, in order to make the lady ridiculous and contemptible, Mr. Kegan Paul says, that soon after entering her new home in The Polygon, Mrs. Clairmont, from the balcony outside her drawing-room window, addressed Godwin (sitting in the balcony outside his drawing-room window) in these words, 'Is it possible that I behold the immortal Godwin?'—words that, tickling the philosopher's inordinate vanity, are represented as going far to enslave him. Let it be assumed that the widow made the first advances to acquaintanceship with her neighbour in this absurd fashion; that she set her cap at the widower, angled for him, caught him. Why should so much be made of this to the second Mrs. Godwin's discredit, by writers who have nothing but eulogy for Mary Wollstonecraft, though she ran wildly after Fuseli, and certainly did not leave it to Godwin to make the first advances to her? We have Godwin's published word that he made no such advances to her; and we have his serious declaration, in the private note intended only for Mary Wollstonecraft's eye, that his ambition to heal her wounded heart resulted from her action in throwing herself on his compassionate sympathy.

It is urged by Mr. Kegan Paul, that Godwin's second marriage was not a remarkably happy one; that Godwin would have lived on the whole more serenely, from middle to old age, had he not wedded the widow Clairmont; that they had two or three lively quarrels, and divers keen disputes; that some of his old friends disliked her so much that they visited her husband less frequently; that she was a 'managing,' domineering woman, with a far from happy temper. All this must be admitted, though every count of the indictment is pressed against

the lady with extravagant exaggeration. When all has been urged that can be fairly urged to the discredit of her temper, the second Mrs. Godwin was a less irascible and overbearing woman than Mary Wollstonecraft. There are grounds for a strong opinion that had Godwin been Mary Wollstonecraft's domestic mate for thirty years, instead of some ten or eleven months, he would have suffered far more from her temper, than he suffered from his second wife's temper during more than thirty years. If in one of their squabbles arising from paltry questions, Godwin and his second wife talked about separating from one another when they had been married only a year and ten months, let it be remembered in what terms he was moved to write to Mary Wollstonecraft, when he had been (legally) married to her only three weeks. If the man of letters and his second wife had another lively difference in August, 1811, when they had been married nine years and seven months, the quarrel ended under circumstances, affording evidence of much good feeling on Mrs. Godwin's part, and also of the strong mutual affection of the husband and wife. The documents of Mr. Kegan Paul's book (documents he cannot be supposed to have read) yield conclusive testimony that, whilst falling out with her, and scolding her roundly once in a while, Godwin had a high regard for his second wife's energy, a corresponding respect for her good sense and discretion in affairs of business, a genuine admiration for several of her qualities, a curious pride in the gentility of her birth, and a steady affection for her,—in truth, all the sentimental fondness so cold a man could feel for any woman. There is a homely saying in Wiltshire that 'married people are made to bicker and breed.' Godwin and his wife bickered barely up to the standard of Wiltshire morals; and their recorded bickerings are never without indications of a homely (albeit quite unromantic) liking for one another. Of their petty tiffs and short-lived quarrels, biography would never have said a word, had not the Shelleyan enthusiasts thought it needful to hunt up materials for palliating Mary Godwin's conduct, in running away from her father's house with another woman's husband.

'The old acquaintances,' Mr. Kegan Paul says in his general account of Godwin's life in 1802-3, the first year of his married life with his second wife, 'did not like Mrs. Godwin, and she did not like them; she was a harsh stepmother, whom his

children feared.' There are, of course, two sides to the story of Mrs. Godwin's dislike of her husband's old friends. The dislike has in some cases been exaggerated; and her dislike of some of the people was reasonable and even creditable to her. Possibly her children feared her; for the way, in which children were generally governed in English homes eighty years since, caused them often to fear parents who abounded in parental affection. But there is no evidence that she was a 'harsh stepmother,' in any fair sense of the term, apart from Mrs. Shelley's vindictive words against her. Such scanty evidence as Mr. Kegan Paul gives us from the Field Place papers, goes in the other direction. On this point Mr. Kegan Paul makes strong assertions without supporting them with facts, which he certainly would have done, had the facts been to hand. He says (speaking of 1802-3):—

'She' (i.e. the second Mrs. Godwin) 'had strong views, in which many would agree, that each child should be educated to some definite duties, and with a view of filling some useful place in life; but this arrangement soon had at least a show of partiality. It was found that Jane Clairmont's mission in life, according to her mother's view, was to have all the education, and even accomplishments, which their slender means would admit, and more than they would admit; while household drudgery was from an early age discovered to be the life-work of Fanny and Mary Godwin.'

This is the case against Mrs. Godwin, as it is put by the gentleman who insists that Claire (in after-life a governess) was six or seven years older than Mary. As they were of the same age, it was incumbent on Mrs. Godwin to treat them alike in respect to educational advantages; but it is droll that Mr. Kegan Paul, who declares Claire to have been so much the older of the two girls, should be so severe on Mrs. Godwin for spending more money on the education of the elder girl (so soon to be a governess), than on the younger who was still a little child. What accomplishments can Mary (from five to six years old in 1802-3) have been denied by her harsh stepmother, that so much should be made of the denial? The truth is that the two girls of about the same age were educated precisely in the same way, by the same governess, and with the same books. In other matters they were treated in the same way; taking their childish 'treats' together or by turns, and taking their punishments in proportion to their naughtiness. It has already been seen, how

Mary went with her stepmother in May, 1811 (a rare 'outing' for the Skinner-Street people in those days!), Claire being left at home. Had Mrs. Godwin taken Claire and left Mary in Skinner Street, what a fuss the Shelleyan apologists would have made about Mrs. Godwin's galling neglect of Mary and partiality for her own girl! The alleged difference in the treatment of the two children existed only in the imagination of Mary, who inherited some of the worst defects of her mother's temper.

These two children, of the same household and about the same age, were fifteen years old, when Godwin received a letter from a stranger, begging for information respecting Mary Wollstonecraft's daughters, and asking especially whether they were educated in accordance with their mother's educational theories,—an inquiry to which Godwin replied with a statement that Mary Wollstonecraft's daughters had not been educated in accordance with their mother's educational notions. 'They are,' he wrote, 'neither of them brought up with an exclusive attention to the system and ideas of their mother.' At the same time, Godwin told his unknown correspondent that he was chiefly moved to marry his second wife by considerations arising from his sense of his own incompetence to educate his daughters. Further, he remarked that he and his wife were too fully occupied by the labour of maintaining their family, to 'have leisure enough for reducing theories to practice;'—a series of significant admissions.

There is another piece of remarkable evidence, respecting the education Godwin gave his children, to be found amongst the excellent materials of Mr. Kegan Paul's book of blunders. Four days after the boy's withdrawal from the Charterhouse School, Godwin sent his step-son Charles a book, instead of another work the lad had been advised to read. On sending the book to Ramsgate, where Charles was staying with his mother, Godwin, on 24th May, 1811, wrote to Mrs. Godwin in these words:—

'I send Charles's book agreeably to his desire The very choice of the book is taken out of my hands; T. T. undertook to procure for him Paine's *Age of Reason*; this I objected to. It is written in a vein of banter and impudence, and though I do not wish the young man to be the slave of the religion of his country, there are few things I hate more than a young man, with his little bit of knowledge, setting-up to turn up his nose, and elevate his eyebrows, and make his sorry joke at everything the wisest and best men England ever produced, have treated

with veneration. Therefore I preferred a work by Anthony Collins, the friend of Locke, written with sobriety and learning, to the broad grins of Thomas Paine. . . . Observe, I totally object to Mary's reading in Charles's book. I think it much too early for him, but I have been driven, so far as he is concerned, from the standing of my own judgment by the improper conduct of T. T.'

It is instructive to observe how William Godwin fell away from his philosophical theories as soon as he was required to put them in practice. It is one thing for a scholar to theorize in his arm-chair for the guidance of individuals, who are unknown to him; another thing for him to act on his precepts, in the education of persons to whom he is drawn by parental affection. In theory an enemy to marriage, when Mary Wollstonecraft gave him her wounded heart, he had lived with her in Free Love for only a few months, when he discovered that he had better marry her. From the day of his marriage he moved further away from his old hostility to wedlock, till he altogether abandoned his former views against marriage, and became a supporter of the institution he had so long derided. A theorist on education, he no sooner had little girls to care for at his own hearth, than he discovered his 'incompetence for the education of daughters,' and bethought himself that he had better find a second wife, who would bring them up in the old-fashioned way. A bold Deist whilst he was a bachelor, he became a timid Deist in private life on becoming a father. When Charles Clairmont came to reasonable years, Godwin shrunk from the thought of giving him the *Age of Reason* and would fain have postponed his introduction to Free Thought. On putting Anthony Collins' moderate book in the hands of the sixteen-years-old boy, he was urgent that his daughter (in her fourteenth year) should not be allowed to look into the book.

Godwin's reluctance to act on his theories, his absolute abandonment in mature middle age of several of his social views (especially his notorious theories respecting marriage), must be borne in mind by readers, who would judge between him and Shelley, in regard to matters that must soon be narrated. Orthodox cynics have laughed over the old man's chagrin at his daughter's elopement with another woman's husband, and have declared him properly punished by the scandalous incident for his denunciations of wedlock. Men of the world, like Trelawny (a true sailor to the last in finding a new love wher-

ever he harboured), have made merry over Godwin's displeasure and wrath at the elopement. In his old age, Trelawny used to maintain stoutly that, as Shelley acted in this matter in accordance with the philosopher's published doctrine, the latter had no right to complain of the poet's action towards Mary. By the majority of the Shelleyan apologists, it is declared or suggested that Godwin, with a marriageable daughter in his house, was bound by the words he uttered against marriage long before he had a daughter; as though he had no right to change his views after coming to mature age. Whilst questions, touching Godwin's relations with, and conduct to, Shelley are debated in this fashion, it cannot be stated too plainly that his views about marriage in 1814, and in many previous years, had nothing in common with what he thought against marriage, before his union with Mary Wollstonecraft.

In his *Leaf from the Real Life of Lord Byron*, the rash and deplorable article on matters about which he knew nothing, Mr. Froude asserted that Mary Godwin was, in her childhood, 'bred up to regard love as the essential part of marriage;' these words being used in a sense which caused the essayist to assert that, notwithstanding this breeding-up, she was 'a perfectly pure innocent woman.' This assertion that in her childhood Mary was indoctrinated in the anti-matrimonial views her father had abandoned, is absolutely the reverse of fact. Godwin's children and step-children were educated much like other English children of their social degree; just as they would have been educated had he, instead of being a Deist, been a lukewarm member of the Church of England. Sent to a Church of England school, Charles Clairmont was in no way introduced to Free Thought till he had entered his seventeenth year, and had it not been for T. Turner's busybodyism, the young man's introduction to Free Thought would have been deferred till he was much older. Instructed by professional governesses and men-teachers, Mary Godwin and Claire were taught chiefly out of the books produced by their parents in the way of their business, for use in Church-of-England and other Denominational Schools. Their minds were not led prematurely to think about marriage. No eccentric notions touching the intercourse of the sexes had been put into Mary's mind, when Shelley made her acquaintance. It may be assumed confidently, from the way in which she was educated, that she had never known anything of her mother's

painful history and peculiar views, till Shelley spoke to her about them, and used them as arguments for inducing her to become his mistress. It is certain from her own written words that, instead of regarding marriage as an idle form, she regarded it as a sacred and momentous ceremony. As Godwin was so urgent that she should not be allowed to look into 'Charles's book,' and thought sixteen years a 'much too early' age for Charles's introduction to Free Thought, we may be sure he thought the age *very* much too early for a clever girl's initiation in the views of Free-thinkers.

Enough has been said to show that, though her temper was defective, the *Edinburgh Review* (October, 1882) had no sufficient justification for saying, on the authority of Mr. Kegan Paul, that the second Mrs. Godwin 'was a person who rendered life intolerable to those who shared it with her.' The evidence is superabundant that she did not render life intolerable, or otherwise than fairly enjoyable, to her husband, her elder son Charles, her younger son William, and Mary Wollstonecraft's illegitimate daughter Fanny. That Fanny got on pleasantly with Mrs. Godwin, and that Mrs. Godwin proved a good and kind mother to this child of shameful birth, are sufficient testimony that Mary's stepmother was by no means so bad a woman as certain of the Shelleyan apologists would have us think her. The fault was not wholly on Mrs. Godwin's side that, on entering the period in which girlhood passes imperceptibly into womanhood,—the period when high-spirited girls are sometimes very difficult persons to control,—Mary and Claire went into rebellion against her. Godwin's admission to his unknown correspondent, that his favourite child was 'singularly bold, somewhat imperious,' points to some of the difficulty Mrs. Godwin experienced in managing the girl, who had inherited a liberal share of Mary Wollstonecraft's quick, fervid, and querulous nature. Beautiful in different styles, clever in different ways, these two wilful, daring, saucy pussies, would have tried the temper and skill of the most judicious governess. Mrs. Godwin being what she was, it is not surprising that they went into rebellion against her government, and constituted themselves 'the opposition' in the Skinner-Street Parliament. It was a grievous misfortune of both damsels, that Shelley (ever quick to sympathize with 'the victims of domestic tyranny') made their acquaintance, when they were in this dangerous period of girlhood.

That the handsome, clever, managing Mrs. Godwin had great influence over her husband, is shown by the way in which she induced him to become a publisher and retail seller of children's educational books,—the business being so arranged that she was for some time its nominal and actual manager, whilst he, keeping in the background of the affair, avoided public observation. Knowing much of printing and the book-trade, it occurred to the managing lady that she and her husband would do well to go into this business. There was much to be said in favour of the project in 1805, when in the fourth year of their married life, Mr. and Mrs. Godwin were no richer than they had been on their wedding-day. Still earning an income that would have been wealth to him as a bachelor, Godwin had not 'done well' of late years. Since his second marriage things had been going ill with him. His income was waning, his family had increased. Fanny was rising twelve; Charley was ten; Jane (*i.e.* Claire) and Mary were rising eight; Willie, the babe of the household, was nearing the end of his second year. How were these children to be clothed, fed, taught, and raised creditably into young men and women, on an income that, already barely sufficient for present necessities, seemed likely to dwindle to smaller revenue? With all their industry, Godwin and his wife had barely kept things going; and they were now nearing a time of life (Godwin was in his fiftieth year), when even the most improvident people begin to anticipate the usual incidents of life's decline.

Under these circumstances, the shop was opened in 1805, in Hanway Street, Oxford Street, under the name of M. J. Godwin and Co.; the M. J. Godwin being Mary Jane, whose Co. at The Polygon, and on the shop-front, went to work bravely in throwing off copy for new Children's Books, to be published under the *nom-de-plume* of Baldwin. Mrs. Godwin also worked hard with her pen, whilst she went daily from The Polygon to the little shop near Oxford Street, to look after the person who had been engaged to wait on customers; Godwin keeping in the background, because his reputation might be hurtful to the venture, were the shop known to be his shop, and many of the books sold in it known to be by his pen. Something less than two years later, when the business (which, beginning in this modest way, became a considerable affair) was moved to Skinner Street, it was decided with questionable discretion that Godwin

should live over his own shop, and, dropping all concealment, work the business under his own name. The business was thus removed to Skinner Street in May, 1807.

Thus it was that the Godwins of The Polygon, Somers Town, became the Godwins of Skinner Street. There is room for two opinions respecting the policy of the enterprise, that made Godwin for the remainder of his working days a struggling tradesman; whilst with failing powers he persisted in literary toil. But much may be said against the view taken by the partisans who, never finding aught to commend in anything for which Mrs. Godwin was accountable, maintain it was an evil day for the man of letters when he was persuaded by his meddlesome wife to go into 'the trade.' Burdened with a wife and five children, Godwin's only prospect, towards the close of his time at Somers Town, was one of incessant labour and anxiety about money. Had he kept out of business, he would, perhaps, have needed the help of his friends in a greater degree. On the whole, I am disposed to think that, whilst his difficulties were somewhat lighter, his means of supporting his family were somewhat greater, than they would have been had he remained in The Polygon, and kept clear of the commercial side of literature. Sending his boys to good schools, he gave his girls the usual training, together with some of the accomplishments and pleasures, of young gentlewomen. In some respects it might have been cheerier without being in any way costlier or more luxurious; but the house in Skinner Street was a fairly happy home for the five young people who, one and all, called Godwin 'papa' and Mrs. Godwin 'mamma.'

CHAPTER IV.

THE IRISH CAMPAIGN, AND THE STAY AT NANTGWILLT.

Opium and Hallucination at Keswick—Migration to Ireland—Shelley's Letters to Miss Hitchener—Curran's Coldness to the Adventurer—Publication of the *Address to the Irish People*—Measures for putting the Pamphlet in Circulation—Harriett's Amusement—Shelley's Seriousness—Shelley's other Irish Tract—Public Meeting in the Fishamble Street Theatre—Shelley's Speech to the Sixth Resolution—Various Accounts of the Speech—Mr. MacCarthy's bad Manners—Honest Jack Lawless—His Project for a History of Ireland—His Way of handling Shelley—William Godwin's Alarm—Shelley's Submission—His Intercourse with Curran—His Withdrawal from Ireland—Seizure of his Papers at the Holyhead Custom-House—Harriett's Letter to Portia—The Shelleys in Wales—Miss Hitchener's 'Divine Suggestion'—Harriett and Eliza don't think it 'Divine'—Shelley at Nantgwillt—His Scheme for turning Farmer—His comprehensive Invitation to the Godwins—His sudden Departure from Nantgwillt—Cause of the Departure—Mr. MacCarthy again at Fault.

THAT they may realize the physical condition of the young man who was so easily educated into thinking prodigious evil of Thomas Jefferson Hogg, readers should remember that Shelley was taking laudanum whilst he was at Keswick. The letter which affords evidence of this important fact is believed by Mr. Rossetti to be the earliest of the numerous writings, touching the poet's use of the tincture of opium; but it may not be inferred that he came to Keswick without having made acquaintance with the drug, of which he was a free consumer in subsequent stages of his life.

Making acquaintance with opium at a somewhat earlier time of life than Byron, though probably in the same year of grace as the older poet, Shelley was so liberal an opium-taker that the drug's influence on the nervous system must be borne in mind by those, who would account for his successive hallucinations, and other exhibitions of nervous disorder. Even by the medical observer, the effects of laudanum are sometimes mistaken for manifestations of lunacy. Mr. Rossetti certainly had good grounds for suggesting that laudanum

was at the bottom of the marvellous tale, with which Shelley thrilled the nerves of Eliza and Harriett in the last week of his stay at Keswick. The story, told with every show of sincerity by the victim of hallucination, or perplexing semi-delusion, if he is not to be regarded as the utterer of a deliberate invention, was that on returning from a walk to his home, he had been assailed by a robber, with consequences that might have been tragic, had not the assault been fortunately made under the very eaves of Mr. Calvert's roof. By falling over his own door-step, Shelley had been so fortunate as to fall out of the bandit's grasp. Few readers will hesitate in the opinion that if this wondrous tale was not in some degree an affair of hallucination, it was altogether untruth.

Shelley would have gone to Ireland with firmer confidence in his measures for emancipating the Catholics, and Repealing the Union, had he been attended to the field of philanthropic action by that equally sublime and swarthy young woman, Miss Eliza Hitchener, schoolmistress of Hurstpierpoint. Could this young woman, who seized every occasion for sowing the seeds of Deism and Republicanism in the minds of her infantile pupils, have been induced to throw up her school and start for Dublin at a moment's notice, Shelley's Irish expedition might have had a different ending. The need for Miss Hitchener's presence on the field of moral and political illumination was felt so strongly by Shelley, that he had scarcely taken possession of furnished lodgings at No. 7 Sackville Street, Dublin, when he wrote to her, imploring she would come to him instantly—and for ever. But Miss Hitchener could not be moved so easily. Having charge of certain little Americans, a source of income not to be surrendered recklessly, she wished for time in which to dispose of the goodwill of her school, ere she flitted to Dublin for the sake of the poor Irish. Smuggler's daughter though she was, Miss Hitchener lacked the spirit to think cheerily of crossing the Irish Channel without any escort. So Shelley was constrained to do his best for Ireland without her personal co-operation. It being clear that his reunion with Miss Hitchener must be deferred till he should have settled the Irish question, saved Ireland, and retired for ever to some delightful cottage in North Wales, Shelley wrote from 7 Sackville Street, Dublin, to the incomparable lady on 14th February, 1812, that he looked forward to the pleasure of meeting her in Wales, in the fol-

lowing summer. Joining hands once more in Wales, they would never again part company.

(1) *Dublin: from 12th February, 1812, to 7th April, 1812: just seven weeks and five days!*—Leaving Whitehaven for the Isle of Man on 3rd February, 1812, Shelley, with his two travelling companions (Eliza and Harriett), reached Dublin somewhere during the night of the 12th of the same month, after enduring manifold discomforts in the course of a journey that, rough and wretched by land, was yet rougher and more wretched by sea. After recovering from fatigue of travel, the three adventurers bestirred themselves for the good of Ireland, and in doing so, took two or three steps that may at least be declared not wholly and directly at variance with common sense. To avoid the costlier discomforts of a hotel, they lost no time in exposing themselves to the cheaper discomforts of a Sackville Street lodging-house. Having thus planted himself in the capital of the country he had visited from philanthropic motives, Shelley called (with Godwin's letter of introduction in his hand) on the Master of the Rolls (Curran),—an attention the Master of the Rolls was in no hurry to repay; though Shelley came to Dublin with a not altogether groundless hope of being welcomed cordially by the great orator who, having done fairly well for himself by patriotism, had for several years held the official place that, whilst lowering his zeal for patriotic agitation, required him to exercise a certain amount of circumspection in admitting patriots to his domestic circle. Fortunately for Curran, he was 'not at home' on the occasion of Shelley's first call; and it is conceivable that, having been so fortunate in all honesty, the Master of the Rolls decided to be equally fortunate on subsequent occasions of a visit from the adventurer, until more satisfactory information respecting William Godwin's young friend should come to hand.

After leaving his card on the Master of the Rolls, Shelley took measures for offering his views on Irish affairs to the people whom he had come to serve and save. It is said that he tried in vain to find a regular publisher for his *Address to the Irish People*. For this statement, though there is other, I know of no better, authority than certain scarcely reliable words of the letter, written from Lynton by Shelley to Mr. Hookham, in 1812, just before Daniel Hill's arrest. Certainly, the work was not a production with which a prudent bookseller, desirous of

standing well in official circles, would care to connect himself. Nor was the youthful author (who, whilst numbering no more than nineteen, had the aspect of only fifteen years) a person to win the confidence of wary booksellers, who could learn nothing about him besides what he was moved to say of himself. If Shelley went about Dublin in search of a publisher, he certainly wasted no long time in the search, for the pamphlet was printed (in execrably bad type, and on paper of corresponding badness) before he had been fully twelve days in the Irish capital.

Whilst the pamphlet was passing through the press, Miss Westbrook bestirred herself for Ireland's regeneration, by collecting 'useful passages' out of Tom Paine's works, with a view to their publication. At the same time, the lady constituted herself keeper of the purse, and made a red cloak.

Fifteen hundred copies of the *Address* having been printed and delivered to the author, he lost no time in offering them to the people he wished to illuminate. A copy of the work was left at each of the sixty principal public-houses. An Irishman, named Daniel Hill, was sent about Dublin with a supply of the pamphlets, and ordered to sell them at five-pence a-piece to all who would buy, and to use his discretion in giving them to persons who could not afford to buy them. At the same time, Shelley and Harriett dropt the pamphlet from the balcony of their windows to passers in Sackville Street, and never went abroad without copies for distribution. To Harriett, 'ready to die with laughter' at their measures for scattering the seeds of wholesome principles amongst the Irish people, the whole affair was a frolic. But what she regarded as comical pastime was the most serious business to Shelley, whose countenance wore its gravest expression, when he dropt his little books into the hands of wayfarers from his Sackville Street balcony, or in his walks about the town furtively slipt a copy of the *Address* into the hood of an old woman's cloak. Having made away with four hundred copies in this manner, Shelley congratulated himself on having caused a prodigious sensation, and being far on the way to a peaceful revolution.

The *Address to the Irish People*, perhaps the weakest and most puerile piece of political pamphleteering that ever proceeded from the pen of a youth of Shelley's years and education, was followed at a brief interval by another pamphlet of his composition, entitled, *Proposals for an Association of those Philan-*

thropists who, convinced of the Inadequacy of the Moral and Political State of Ireland to produce Benefits which are nevertheless attainable, are willing to unite to accomplish its Regeneration; this second tract being followed after a longer interval by the *Declaration of Rights*, a broadside manifesto of wholesome revolutionary principles, in thirty-one numbered articles, with a concluding appeal to all mankind to 'Awake! Arise! or be for ever fallen!' The first of the thirty-one articles (plagiarized without acknowledgment, as Mr. Rossetti has shown, from two documents of the French Revolution, (a) The Declaration by the Constituent Assembly in August, 1789, and (b) the Declaration proposed by Robespierre in April, 1793), announced to all Irishmen interested in the matter,—'Government has no rights; it is a delegation from several individuals for the purpose of securing their own.'

A copy of the *Address* was sent to Curran, who, of course, took no notice of the performance. Fretting at Curran's disdainful indifference to his efforts for the regeneration of Ireland, Shelley wrote to Miss Hitchener of his mean opinion of the lawyer who had consented to serve a tyrannical Government as Master of the Rolls. But in leaving the trio to amuse themselves at their pleasure, without checking or discouraging them, Curran gave Shelley only the same cause of offence, as was given him by all Dublin society during the earlier weeks of his stay in the capital. If Expectation (to use the expression of one of Shelley's letters to Miss Hitchener) was on the tiptoe respecting the purpose of the three lodgers at 7 Lower Sackville Street, she gave no other sign of interest in their proceedings. There may have been a little tittering in the highways, in Trinity College, and in the Four Courts, at the eccentric demeanour of the young gentleman and two ladies, who went about the town forcing copies of a foolish tract into the hands of wayfarers; but few people offered to pay for the literature thus put under their eyes. No one of social influence sought out the author who, after crossing the Channel for the benefit of Ireland, found the Irish people much less ready to know him, than he was ready to make their acquaintance. The trio had been a fortnight in Lower Sackville Street, when Harriett wrote of the Irish people to Miss Hitchener, 'We have seen very little of them as yet; but when Percy is more known I suppose we shall know more at the same time.' The ink with which Harriett

wrote these words had been dry for little more than twenty-four hours, when Shelley was brought face to face with the Irish people, on the evening of 28th February, 1812, at the 'Aggregate Meeting of the Catholics of Ireland,' held in the Fishamble Street Theatre for the furtherance of Catholic Emancipation,—a meeting at which O'Connell was chief orator, and Shelley spoke as seconder of the sixth resolution, 'That the grateful thanks of this Meeting are due, and hereby returned to Lord Glentworth, the Right Hon. Maurice Fitzgerald, and the other distinguished Protestants who have this day honoured us with their presence.'

To second the sixth resolution at a public meeting is not to take an important part in its proceedings. Under ordinary circumstances it is to utter a few words, that are heard by few in the stir and hubbub of the breaking up of the assembly, and are rated by the reporters for the press as a mere formality, undeserving commemoration in a separate paragraph. Shelley's speech certainly attracted some attention at the moment of its delivery, and caused some subsequent talk. But it was only one of the concluding and insignificant incidents of an important demonstration. Chief-constable Michael Farrell disposed of the eloquence, that commended the sixth resolution to the aggregate Catholics, in this brief sentence, 'Lord Glentworth said a few words; a Mr. Bennett spoke, also a Mr. Shelley, who stated himself to be a native of England.' In an official report of an inferior constable, Shelley's name does not appear; nor does the report contain any reference to his speech, unless Mr. Manning made the mistake of attributing to another youthful orator the words that proceeded from Shelley's lips. Whilst the constables dealt thus lightly with Shelley's oration, the reporters for the press noticed it in significant paragraphs. The *Freeman's Journal* (29th February, 1812) honoured it with eighty words. The *Dublin Evening Post* gave it 216 words. The *Patriot* of the 2nd of March thought it worthy of 345 commemorative words. It is, therefore, well upon the record that Shelley spoke a piece of his mind to what Mr. Denis Florence MacCarthy calls 'an immense assembly.'

The speech was certainly made. But there is a curious conflict as to the length and tenor of the speech, the style in which it was delivered, and the way in which it was received. Lady Shelley wishes us to believe that, by an unreasonable

display of tolerance for the Irish Protestants, Shelley provoked savage yells from his Catholic auditors. Mr. Denis Florence MacCarthy produces half-a-dozen scraps of old newspapers in evidence, that the young poet's maiden essay in political oratory charmed and moved its hearers in a singular degree, causing them to hail him with delight, 'whilst joy beamed in every countenance and rapture glistened in every eye.' Whilst the circumstances of the case, including the reports of the newspapers, dispose the discreet reader to think it probable that the speech held the attention of the meeting for five or ten minutes, persons who believe Shelley incapable of anything in the way of misstatement are convinced by a passage in one of his letters to Miss Hitchener that he spoke for upwards of an hour.

Though it is not to be imagined that the seconder of the sixth resolution was allowed to talk for more than an hour, there is sufficient evidence that, after rising on his legs, Shelley took occasion to introduce himself with unusual particularity to his hearers, and to inform them of the considerations and purpose that had brought him to Ireland. It is also certain that his utterances were received with alternate expressions of approval and dissent; that he was applauded for expressing his abhorrence of English misrule, and checked with even more emphatic indications of displeasure, when he spoke of mere differences of religious opinion, as trivialities that should not be allowed to divide the people of the same nation. Shelley himself certainly made none too much of the expressions of dissent when he wrote to Miss Hitchener on 14th March, 1812 (from 17 Grafton Street, to which address he had moved from 7 Lower Sackville Street), that his speech was misunderstood; that, though he won some applause by stating the objects of his expedition to Ireland, he was hissed for his remarks touching religion; and that 'the newspapers,' which gave significant prominence to his speech, 'only noted that which did not excite disapprobation.'

With this confession of oratorical misadventure under their eyes, most readers will think Hogg right in saying:—

'On one occasion he' (i.e. Shelley) 'told me that at a meeting—probably at the meeting of the philanthropists—so much ill-will was shown to the Protestants that, thereupon, he was provoked to remark that the Protestants were fellow Christians, fellow subjects, and as such

were entitled to equal rights, to equal charity, toleration, and the rest. He was forthwith interrupted by savage yells; a tremendous uproar arose, and he was compelled to be silent.'

If Shelley showed himself so comically ignorant of Irish politics, as to assure a meeting of Dublin Catholics that religious equality with the majority of the Irish nation should at least be accorded to the Protestant minority, it is not surprising that he was silenced. Hogg may have exaggerated what Shelley told him with exaggeration, and his way of writing about 'the Catholics' and 'the philanthropists,' as though the terms meant the same thing, is not the only example of reprehensible looseness in his account of Shelley's Irish campaign. But in the main the biographer's account of the poet's campaign is by no means too unfavourable to the youthful adventurer; and Mr. Denis Florence MacCarthy is guilty of bad temper and worse manners, in stigmatizing the author of the faulty narrative a 'liar of the first magnitude.'

That Shelley found an opportunity for introducing himself to the Irish people in Fishamble Street was due to the influence of Mr. John Lawless, whose acquaintance he had made shortly before the meeting. A keen politician, who enjoyed in his party the equally flattering and suspicious designation of 'honest Jack Lawless,' and a flighty gentleman of letters, who produced two years later an absolutely meritless contribution to *The History of Ireland*, Mr. Lawless was quick to recognize in Shelley a young gentleman, whom he would do well to befriend. An organizer of the aggregate meeting, Mr. Lawless used his influence to put the young gentleman to the fore. Had it not been for honest Jack, the Dublin papers would have been silent about the points of Shelley's speech that 'did not excite disapprobation,' and more or less communicative about the points that occasioned uproar. After affording Shelley an opportunity for introducing himself to the Dublin public, and nursing him through the reports of the meeting, 'honest Jack' took occasion to introduce the youthful adventurer, yet more fully to the Irish people, in the article that appeared in the *Dublin Weekly Messenger* of 'March, 1812;' the article that was at the same time a personal memoir of the adventurer, and a critical review of his *Address to the Irish People*; the article that, after speaking of Shelley as the son of 'a member of the Imperial Parliament' and 'the immediate heir to one of the

first fortunes in England,' concluded with a handsome reference to the 'very beautiful poem' which he had written for the benefit 'of our distinguished countryman, Mr. Finerty.'

At the same time Mr. Lawless took occasion to introduce Mrs. Honest Jack Lawless to Shelley's womankind, and to welcome the trio to his hearth, where he entertained them with the best fruit and vegetables of the Dublin market, and would have fed them on richer fare, had they not recently joined the Nineteenth Century Pythagoreans, and as Pythagoreans bound themselves to abstain from flesh and fermented liquors.

It is not to be imagined that honest Jack showered these civilities on the Shelleys without a thought for civilities, to be rendered by the Shelleys in return. One may need money without being an Irishman. It is not to bring a blush to Erin's cheek, that honest Jack is mentioned on this page as an Irish gentleman whose command of gold was insufficient for his necessities. Though he appeared very much a minor, 'the *immediate* heir to one of the first fortunes of England' was a person whom honest Jack regarded as a person who might prove a profitable acquaintance. A man of the world, more than thirty years old, Mr. Lawless was not so absolutely undeserving of his peculiar epithet, as to be capable of robbing so young a gentleman without throwing a show of honesty into the predatory business. Moreover, Mr. Lawless saw at a glance that his new acquaintance, who went to Miss Westbrook for six-pences as he wanted them, was no youth to be plucked at a card-table or plundered on a racecourse. The young gentleman who lived on milk and vegetables, and seldom had more than half-a-crown in his pocket, was no young gentleman to be bled and fleeced in the ordinary way. Mr. Lawless conceived the happy thought of drawing Shelley into partnership in a great and beneficent literary enterprise.

Himself a man of letters, Mr. Lawless wished to write a *History of Ireland*, that would exhibit the grandeur and misfortunes of the Irish people, and educate its readers in the sacred principles of Irish patriotism. Having already written the opening chapters of such a history, Mr. Lawless saw in the immediate heir to one of the first fortunes of England a fit coadjutor in so glorious an enterprise. Men of letters, they both burned to liberate Ireland. What more beautiful than for two such friends to co-operate for so sublime a purpose?

For their needful enlightenment, the Irish people required above all things a good *History of Ireland*. To give Ireland what she most needed, the Irish politician and the English scholar must work in unison, throwing all their energies into the undertaking, and deeming no sacrifice too great for so grand an object. Mr. Lawless felt this and said it. On hearing honest Jack's opinion, Shelley concurred in it cordially. To both gentlemen it was obvious that their enterprise would require money. To both it seemed preposterous and unendurable, that the Irish people should remain in ignorance of their country's story, through the difficulty of raising the insignificant sum of two hundred and fifty pounds, which would suffice to put the presses to work. It might, perhaps, be necessary to spend another hundred pounds or so; but should the first volume have the sale, to be anticipated for the initial tome of an enthralling narrative, the ridiculously small sum of 250*l.* (a sum that would, of course, be repaid again and again by the profits of the publication) would suffice to break the fetters from Erin's bruised and wounded limbs, and chase the darkness of ignorance from a liberated country. Was such a work to be deferred for the want of a miserable 250*l.*, whilst John Lawless was known for his honesty in every castle and cabin, south of the Giant's Causeway, and whilst his young friend was the immediate heir of one of the first fortunes of England? To obtain the equally trivial and necessary sum, Shelley seized a pen and wrote (*vide* Medwin's *Life of Shelley*) to Mr. Medwin, the Horsham lawyer,—saying how he was engaged with a literary friend in producing a voluminous *History of Ireland*, and needed 250*l.* for the execution of the enterprise. Of course, the Horsham lawyer was assured by his youthful client, that the sale of the *History* would yield great profit, and that the 250*l.* would be repaid in eighteen months. It is more curious and remarkable that, in pressing Mr. Medwin to provide the needful money for the project, Shelley assured the lawyer that two hundred and fifty pages of the work were already printed:—a statement for which the vigour and liveliness of the writer's imagination may perhaps be held accountable.

It speaks less for Mr. Lawless's honesty, than for his cleverness, in drawing wind to his sails from every passing breeze, that this letter was written when Shelley had been barely five weeks in Dublin, and possibly had not known him for a month.

How Mr. Medwin answered the letter does not appear ; but it may be assumed confidently that if he provided the 250*l.*, he required that the transaction should be withheld from the knowledge of Shelley's father. Nor does it appear whether Mr. Lawless drew money for his literary project out of his young friend's pocket. But the known circumstances of their intimacy leave little room for doubt that Shelley's purse was accountable for the Irish gentleman's persistence in the labours, that resulted in his *Compendium of the History of Ireland, from the Earliest Period to the Reign of George I.* (1814) ;—a work on which he was engaged between the dates of Shelley's two visits to Ireland.

During his stay in Dublin, Shelley continued to correspond with the philosopher of Skinner Street, writing him at least three long letters, dated respectively on 24th February, 8th March, and 18th March ; letters to which Godwin replied on 4th March, 14th March, and 30th March. Resembling in their adulatory and reverential extravagances his earlier epistles from Keswick to the same correspondent, Shelley's letters from Dublin to William Godwin are chiefly remarkable for evidence that he was looking yearningly for the pleasures of personal intimacy with the sage, whom he was pleased to regard and address as his intellectual guide and guardian.

Whilst Shelley addressed him in the most deferential strain, Godwin abounded with almost parental anxiety for the young man, who appeared to the literary veteran to have gone to Ireland on a mission, that could not fail to result in discredit to the adventurer, and might be fruitful of insurrection and bloodshed. Godwin would have been less apprehensive for his correspondent's safety, had he known him personally, and would have had no fear whatever for the peace of Ireland, had he realized the indifference (qualified by the slightest sense of amusement) with which the Dublin police and populace regarded the proceedings of the boyish agitator.

The substance of Godwin's admonitions to his youthful correspondent was just this :—Get out of Ireland promptly, or mischief will ensue to yourself and others from your madcap expedition ; and after leaving Ireland, get the better of the misconceptions and self-conceit that make you think yourself competent to settle perplexing questions, that have proved too much for the wisest statesmen. It is to Shelley's credit that

he took such advice in good part, and wrote from 17 Grafton Street, on 18th March, 1812, to his Mentor, that, in deference to the expostulations and counsels of the author of *Political Justice*, he had withdrawn his Irish pamphlets from circulation, and was making ready to quit Dublin. Acknowledging the indiscretion, insufficiency, and unseasonableness of his measures for dealing with the grievances of Ireland, he declared his intention to leave the Irish, at least for a while, to manage their own affairs.

It was thus that, at the close of his fifth week in Dublin, and two days before writing to Mr. Medwin, of Horsham, for 250*l.* to be spent on the production of a new and voluminous *History of Ireland*, Shelley desisted from his efforts to force his two pamphlets upon public attention, and acknowledged the unsoundness of the measures they recommended. It does not, however, follow that Godwin was so largely accountable for this change of opinion as he had reason to imagine himself. One of the few points on which Mr. Hogg and Mr. Denis Florence MacCarthy are of the same mind is, that Godwin's arguments and expostulations had little or nothing to do with the speedy extinction of Shelley's confidence in his own remedies for Irish grievances; and though the concession is by no means favourable to Shelley's reputation for sincerity, it may be conceded that the point, on which the two biographers are thus unanimous, is also one of the points in respect to which both biographers are in the right. The fact is, that Shelley's enthusiastic concern for the Irish people had played itself out when the second of Godwin's expostulatory letters gave him a convenient pretext for retiring from a position that no longer afforded him congenial excitement. Hence the letter which moved Godwin to write to Curran, begging him even yet to pay some attention to the young enthusiast, who had shown so commendable and engaging a readiness to shape his course in obedience to the advice of his superiors by age and experience.

Whilst Godwin overflowed with approval of his young friend's submissiveness to reason, Shelley could congratulate himself on the results of his announcement that, for the present, he should leave the Irish to manage their own affairs. Raising him in the regard of the philosopher, whose favour he was especially desirous of winning, the announcement brought him invitations to Curran's dinner-table, where he discovered to his

mortification, that a famous patriot may, in his declining years, love good cheer almost as much as his country, and be scarcely more distinguished by devotion to liberty than by a taste for obscene stories.

Enough has been said of Shelley's 'Irish campaign' to show that, so far as his reputation is concerned, the kindest way of dealing with the farcical affair is to make fun of its absurdities; and that he suffers less from biographers who, dealing lightly with the expedition, palliate its foolishness with kindly reference to the adventurer's juvenility, than from the apologists who discover wisdom and political sagacity in the extravagances of a puerile escapade. To laugh at the droll business is to be in good humour with the boy, whose self-sufficiency is only brought into offensive prominence by attempts to justify it. In this particular the poet's admirers may well prefer Hogg's pleasantry to Mr. MacCarthy's seriousness. In other ways the later biographer defeats his own purpose. It is curious, how he produces evidence, supporting the very assertions whose accuracy he impugns. Maintaining that Shelley's speech in Fishamble Street was favourably received, he prints the poet's confession that he was checked with angry clamour against utterances, to which the newspapers made no reference. Indignant with Hogg for saying the poet was mortified by the miscarriage of his efforts for Ireland, he publishes the very words in which Shelley acknowledges the failure of his schemes. Maintaining that Shelley left Dublin 'at the precise time he had originally arranged to leave it,' he sets forth the testimony that, whereas he withdrew from Ireland on the 7th April, 1812, he had originally designed to stay in Dublin till 'the end of April.' It is thus the author of *Shelley's Early Life* by turns disproves his own charges against Hogg's accuracy, or shows himself more inexact than the biographer whom he accuses of falsehood.

Though it was less sudden and hasty than Hogg imagined, Shelley's withdrawal from Ireland was made three weeks sooner than the time he appointed for the departure, when he was still hopeful for the success of his intervention between the Irish people and their despotic rulers. Whilst writing his last letter from Ireland to William Godwin (the letter in which he says nothing of his project for a new *History of Ireland* to the philosopher, whom he affects to treat with unqualified confidence), Shelley had determined to leave Dublin in the first

week of the ensuing month, and was already making arrangements for migrating to Wales. One of his preliminary measures was to fill a large deal box with the few copies of his *Address to the Irish People* still remaining on his hand, the much larger number of his second Irish pamphlet yet resting in his possession, and the greater part of the edition of his *Declaration of Rights*,—the broadsides with which he hoped to rouse the farmers of his native county to a perception of their political grievances. This large deal box was addressed to Miss Hitchener, Hurstpierpoint, Sussex, and sent on board the boat for Holyhead, whence Shelley imagined it would pass without observation to the philosophical schoolmistress. In the absence of any person, duly authorized by its owner to pass it through the custom-house, this heavy box was in due course opened, and searched at Holyhead, by Mr. Pierce Thomas, Surveyor of Customs, who, writing to the Secretary of State for the Home Office an account of the inflammatory literature discovered in the chest, also put himself in communication with the Holyhead agent of the General Post Office. Hence the correspondence (still preserved at the Record Office) between secretaries of high degree and local officers of mean estate respecting the big box and its criminatory contents, nothing of which was more likely to agitate the official mind than the following letter from Harriett Shelley to her husband's dear and incomparable friend Miss Hitchener, who had recently adopted the name of Portia, in lieu of her rightful Christian name Eliza (a name already appropriated in 'Percy's little circle' to Miss Westbrook):—

‘*Dublin, March 18th, 1812.*

‘MY DEAR PORTIA,—As Percy has sent you such a large box, so full of inflammable matter, I think I may be allowed to send a little, but not of such a nature as his. I sent you two letters in a newspaper, which I hope you received safe from the intrusion of Postmasters. I sent one of the pamphlets to my Father in a newspaper, which was opened and charged; but which was very trifling compared with what you and Godwin paid.

‘I believe I have mentioned a new acquaintance of ours, a Mrs. Nugent, who is sitting in the room now and talking to Percy about Virtue. You see how little I stand on ceremony. I have seen her but twice before, and I find her a very agreeable, sensible woman. She has felt most severely the miseries of her country, in which she has been a very active member. She visited all the prisons in the time of the Rebellion, to exhort the people to have courage and hope. She says it

was a most dreadful task; but it was her duty, and she would not shrink from the performance of it. This excellent woman, with all her notions of Philanthropy and justice, is obliged to work for her subsistence—to work in a shop, which is a furrier's; there she is every day confined to her needle. Is it not a thousand pities that such a woman should be so dependent on others? She has visited us this evening for about three hours, and is now returned home. The evening is the only time she can get out in the week; but Sunday is her own, and then we are to see her. She told Percy that her country was her only love, when he asked her if she was married. She calls herself *Mrs.*, I suppose, on account of her age, as she looks rather old for a *Miss*. She has never been out of the country and has no wish to leave it.

'This is St. Patrick's night, and the Irish always get very tipsy on such a night as this. The Horse Guards are pacing the streets and will be so all the night, so fearful are they of disturbances, the poor people being very much that way inclined, as provisions are very scarce in the southern counties. Poor Irish people, how much I feel for them! Do you know, such is their ignorance, that when there is a drawing-room held, they go from some distance to see the people who keep them starving to get their luxuries; they will crowd round the state carriages in great glee to see those who have stript them of their rights, and who wantonly revel in a profusion of ill-gotten luxury, whilst so many of those harmless people are wanting bread for their wives and children? What a spectacle! People talk of the fiery spirit of these distressed creatures, but that spirit is very much broken and ground down by the oppressors of this poor country. I may with truth say there are more beggars in this city than any other in the world. They are so poor they have hardly a rag to cover their naked limbs, and such is their passion for drink that when you relieve them one day you see them in the same deplorable condition the next. Poor creatures! they live more on whiskey than anything. for meat is so dear they cannot afford to purchase any. If they had the means I do not know that they would. whiskey being so much cheaper, and to their palates so much more desirable. Yet how often do we hear people say that Poverty is no evil. I think if they had experienced it they would soon alter their tone. To my idea it is the worst of all evils, as the miseries that flow from it are certainly very great; the many crimes we hear of daily are the consequences of poverty, and that, to a very great degree. I think the laws are extremely unjust—they condemn a person to death for stealing thirteen shillings and fourpence.

'Disperse the Declarations. Percy says the farmers are very fond of having something posted upon their walls.

'Percy has sent you all his Pamphlets with the *Declaration of Rights*, which you will disperse to advantage. He has not many of his first Address, having taken pains to circulate them through the city.

'All thoughts of an association are given up as impracticable. We shall leave this noisy town on the 7th of April, unless the Habeas Cor-

pus Act should be suspended, and then we shall be obliged to leave here as soon as possible. Adieu.'

Though he married for love, Shelley did not live many weeks with Harriett before he felt the need of another companion. Had his girlish wife been all the world to him in their honeymoon, and the days immediately following it, he would not have welcomed Hogg so cordially to the Edinburgh lodgings, or left her at York, whilst he made the flying trip to London and Sussex. That he surrendered himself so completely to his sister-in-law's control, was due chiefly to the insufficiency of the pleasure afforded him by Harriett's society. Had he delighted in the music of her voice, the charms of her beauty, and the manifestations of her sensibility, as he would have delighted in them had she been his perfect mate, there would have been in his breast no yearning for another companion, whose presence and sympathy would perfect his felicity. At the moment of setting forth for Ireland, and at the moment of arriving at Dublin, he entreated Miss Hitchener to come to him and Harriett and Eliza, so that an imperfectly happy trio might with her co-operation become a happy party of four. Throughout his sojourn in the Irish capital, he needed Portia for his contentment; and after Portia's refusal to come to him in Ireland, was looking forward to the meeting in Wales or elsewhere, when the Sussex schoolmistress would make it possible for him and Harriett and Eliza to be happy for ever. Had he been fitly mated, he would not so soon after his wedding have desired the society of any woman but his wife. Had Harriett been to him all that a bride usually is to her mate, Miss Hitchener would have been no less out of his mind than she was out of his sight.

As he needed Portia for the completion of his own happiness, the equally vehement and egotistic Shelley imagined she was no less needful for the contentment of his companions. Whilst it says much for his egotism, it speaks no less strongly of his ignorance of feminine nature, that he could think his wife and her sister especially desirous of associating themselves closely with the young woman, of whose wisdom and goodness he was so extravagantly eloquent. It also speaks for his ignorance of womanly nature, that he imagined the Hurstpierpoint schoolmistress would be eager to make the acquaintance of Mrs. Shelley and her sister on terms that would render it difficult for

her to get away from them, should she find them otherwise than congenial companions. That he erred so egregiously on these points, is the more remarkable, because the ladies displayed no strong desire for the arrangement on which he was set.

Instead of fixing herself on the trio, as soon as Shelley afforded her an occasion for doing so, Miss Hitchener more than once displayed a reasonable reluctance to surrender her independent position at Hurstpierpoint for the questionable advantages of a perilous connexion with the sisters whom she had never seen. On the other hand, though they humoured Shelley in writing cordially to his friend at Hurstpierpoint, it is obvious, from several matters, that Mrs. Shelley and her sister were no less doubtful than Miss Hitchener, whether Shelley's scheme for a happy domestic circle would be fruitful of felicity to any one of the party.

Entreated, from Keswick, by Shelley to accompany him to Ireland, Miss Hitchener declined the invitation, on account of her engagements at Hurstpierpoint. Entreated by Shelley to come to him and his wife at Dublin, she held to her purpose of remaining in Sussex. To the proposal that she should come to Wales in the spring, and there make the acquaintance of her Percy's wife and sister-in-law, Miss Hitchener assented; but when spring came, instead of acting on the invitation, she discovered new reasons for remaining at Hurstpierpoint, and wrote to Shelley that, instead of requiring her to break up her school, it would be better for him to bring his wife and sister-in-law to her in Sussex. That Shelley would have relinquished the notion of a meeting in Wales, and acted on this proposal for a meeting in Sussex, had he been master of his own movements, instead of being under the government of two ladies who had no strong desire to make Miss Hitchener's acquaintance, appears from the letter he wrote to the schoolmistress from 17 Grafton Street, Dublin, on 10th March, 1812. 'Your new suggestion,' he exclaims gushingly in this curious epistle, 'of our joining you at Hurst is divine. It shall be so. I have not shown Harriett or E. your letter yet; they are walking with a Mr. Lawless (a valuable man), whilst I write this.' The words exhibit the whole position. To Shelley, yearning for reunion with Miss Hitchener, the proposal for a speedy restoration to her society was so delightful, that no word less eloquent of felicity than 'divine' could express the gratification he anti-

icipated from the meeting. 'It shall be so,' he wrote bravely, before conferring on the matter with the ladies who owned him. But when those ladies returned from their walk with the valuable Jack Lawless, and were invited to join in the assurance that 'it should be so,' the enthusiasm of the subject man was checked by their decision that 'it should *not* be so.'

Thinking in their hearts that the meeting with Miss Hitchener could not be deferred for too long a time, and having obvious and sufficient reasons for thinking Sussex the particular county in which a close intimacy with Miss Hitchener would be most hurtful to their interests, Harriett and Miss Westbrook discovered nothing delightful in the suggestion which had seemed 'divine' to Percy. If they must be brought into familiar intercourse with Percy's schoolmistress, Mrs. Shelley and her sister would rather live with her in Wales, or Devonshire, or Scotland, than at a village within a drive of Field Place, and a stone's throw of Cuckfield. Hence the firmness with which they overruled Shelley's 'it shall be so.' They declined to forego the pleasures of the Welsh trip, to which they had been looking forward so long, simply because Miss Hitchener could not join them. Of course, the pleasure of living in Wales would be enhanced to both of the ladies by the presence of so sympathetic and delightful a woman as Miss Hitchener. But to give up Wales, and travel all the way to Sussex for her acquaintance, would be to pay too high a price for the delight of knowing her. They must go to Wales, hoping that Portia would even yet arrange her affairs so as to join them before they should withdraw from the Principality. The divine suggestion was dismissed as an impracticable suggestion. So sagacious a young woman as Miss Hitchener had no need to ask Shelley why he had, on second thoughts, changed his mind with respect to the suggestion which had pleased him so vastly at first view. By those who know aught of human nature, it will not be questioned that the fight between Miss Westbrook and Miss Hitchener began some months before the July day on which they kissed one another for the first time at Lynton, in North Devon.

(2.)—NANTGWILLT, RHAYADER, RADNORSHIRE, SOUTH WALES.

Crossing a rough sea from Dublin to Holyhead, the trio (attended probably by their Dublin bill distributor, who was certainly in their service in the ensuing summer) traversed Anglesey, made the passage of the Menai Straits, and journeying leisurely through North Wales into the southern shires of the Principality, came, somewhere about 21st April, 1812, to Nantgwillt, five miles from Rhayader, Co. Radnor, where they resided for about seven weeks at Nantgwillt House, at that time in the hands of an insolvent farmer. Delighted with the house, in a familiar part of Radnorshire, and the thought of having his cousin, Tom Grove, for a sociable neighbour, Shelley conceived a desire to settle at Nantgwillt for a considerable time, if not for ever. Here was a bankrupt farmer on the point of leaving a delightful place. Here was a delightful place, whose proprietor would, of course, be only too glad to have so eligible a tenant as the heir of the Castle Goring Shelleys. What, thought Shelley, could be more agreeable to him than to turn farmer? With a bailiff at his elbow to look after matters of vulgar business, he could farm to a profit. The holding comprised a hundred and thirty acres of land under cultivation, and seventy acres of wood, scrub, briery, and mountain; woods in which he and Harriett and Eliza could saunter with their friends, when the summer's sun should be oppressive; hills they could climb in the colder seasons for the enjoyment of the invigorating breeze. Whilst the farm would yield them corn and milk, fruit and vegetables, it would also yield them just the additional money that was needful for their requirements. Whilst the farm would afford them prosperity, they would have leisure for their intellectual pursuits, and larger ability to help their poorer neighbours. The rent for this alluring farm was positively under a hundred a-year. It was *only* 98*l.* a-year; and the lease and stock, including the furniture of the house, could be had for 700*l.* at the outside price! Even this small sum need not be paid till he should have come of age; as the assignees under the bankruptcy would give him credit for eighteen months, provided he found a sufficient friend to be security for the payment of the money, a year and half hence. Feeling he should not let such a chance escape him, Shelley had not been three days at Nantgwillt before he hurried to Cwm Elan to talk

the matter over to Tom Grove. Poor talkers, the Groves were excellent listeners; and Mr. Thomas Grove listened whilst Shelley declared his wish to turn Welsh farmer and settle at Nantgwillt. After hearing the poet's statement of the case, Mr. Grove, without offering to supply the needful money, opened his lips to remark that he should have much pleasure in finding his cousin a suitable person to look after his interests at the valuation. Duly sensible of his kinsman's kindness, Shelley lost no time in writing the characteristic letter (*vide* Medwin's *Life of Shelley*) in which he asked Mr. Medwin, the Horsham lawyer, to become security for the payment of the 600*l.* or 700*l.*

Mr. Medwin may well have perused this letter with a sense of amusement. No long time had passed since he was entreated to supply 250*l.* for the literary venture, that could not fail to bring the *littérateur* money and fame; and now he was required to become security for the payment of seven hundred pounds, to put the man of letters into a Welsh farm. Mr. Medwin had a good practice and money of his own, as well as the command of money belonging to his clients. He had, moreover, made up his mind to draw his young kinsman into his hands, both for the sake of making money out of him, and in order to annoy the Squire of Field Place and old Sir Bysshe, whom he did not love. But knowing Percy would not be happy at Nantgwillt for twelve months, there were obvious reasons why he should think twice before drawing a cheque or signing a bond, to put the youngster into the farm in the loveliest spot of all Radnorshire.

Writing, on 25th April, 1812, to Sussex for the means of taking the farm, Shelley wrote on the same day to London for the friends whom he should need a few months later, for his full enjoyment of the delightful place. His new home was surrounded by scenes of unutterable beauty. Defended by rocks and mountains, that shut out the world's tumult, his chosen valley, peopled by guileless peasants, would afford him all he needed of earthly happiness, when he should have the honour and delight of entertaining the revered William Godwin, together with Mrs. Godwin and all the Skinner-Street family. The philosophic bookseller was entreated to escape from the cold hurry of business, and come with his wife and children to Wales.

How Mr. Medwin, of Horsham, answered Shelley's letter does not appear; but he seems from the event to have dissuaded his youthful client from throwing himself so impulsively into a business of which he knew nothing. Anyhow, Shelley's scheme for turning farmer fell through, and on June 11, 1812, he wrote to Skinner Street, explaining that he could no longer look forward to the pleasure of receiving the Godwins at Nantgwillt House, as he had already retired from that delightful abode to temporary quarters at Cwm-Rhayader.

'We are,' he wrote to the sage of Skinner Street, 'unexpectedly compelled to quit Nantgwillt. I hope, however, before long time has elapsed, to find a home. These accidents are unavoidable to a minor. I hope wherever we are, you, Mrs. Godwin, and your children will come to us this summer.'

Homeless for the moment, the minor deferred the happiness of seeing his London friends until he had found a home in which to receive them. From this light and airy announcement of his sudden and enforced withdrawal from Nantgwillt House, Mr. Denis Florence MacCarthy is inclined to infer that the farmer told the trio to leave his homestead, because he questioned their ability to pay for their entertainment.

'Shelley,' says the author, whose abuse of Hogg determined some of the Shelleyan enthusiasts to declare him a high authority on the poet's 'Early Life,' 'resided at Nantgwillt for seven weeks. He changed his residence, not through any restlessness of disposition, for it is evident he was reluctant to leave it, *but, perhaps*, owing to the doubts of the "farmer" as to the security of his rent. Such is the interpretation I put on the following passage in a letter to Godwin, dated "Cwm-Rhayader, June 11th, 1812:—"We are unexpectedly compelled to quit Nantgwillt. I hope, however, before long time has elapsed, to find a home. These accidents are unavoidable to a minor."'

Shelley's letter to Mr. Medwin disposes of the suspicion which should not have been entertained by the authoritative writer on Shelleyan evidences, though it may well have occurred to Godwin in June, 1812, as a reasonable way of accounting for the unexpected change of residence. Coming to Nantgwillt House at the very moment when the bankrupt farmer was about to leave the holding, and his assignees were looking out for some one to take the remainder of his lease, Shelley may be assumed to have retired from the house at the request of an incoming tenant, who required all the rooms for his own use.

In the failure of his attempt to take the farm, there is enough to account for Shelley's way of speaking of his change of abode as unexpected and involuntary. The incoming tenant's conceivable reluctance to entertain lodgers would be another disappointment of the poet's expectations. There is no direct evidence that Shelley was just then suffering from financial distress in a degree to make the Nantgwillt farmer suspect his solvency. On the contrary, his ability to continue his southward journey within a few days of his retirement from the farmhouse points to the opposite conclusion.

CHAPTER V.

NORTH DEVON.

Mr. Eton's Cottage near Tintern Abbey—Shelley's reason for not taking the Cottage—His Letter to Mr. Eton—Godwin's expostulatory Epistle—His Grounds for thinking Shelley prodigal—Reasonableness of Godwin's admonitions—Hogg and MacCarthy at fault—Shelley's Letters from Lynton to Godwin—Miss Hitchener at Lynton—*Porcia* alias Portia—*Letter* to Lord Ellenborough—Printed at Barnstaple—Mr. Chanter's *Sketches of the Literary History of Barnstaple*—Fifty copies of the *Letter* sent to London—Shelley's Measures for the political Enlightenment of North Devon Peasants—His Irish Servant, Daniel Hill—Commotion at Barnstaple—Daniel Hill's Arrest and Imprisonment—Mr. Sy'e's Alarm—Shelley's humiliating and perilous Position—His Flight from North Devon to Wales—William Godwin's Trip from London to Lynton—His Surprise and Disappointment—His 'Good News' of the Fugitives.

(3.)—LYNTON, NEAR LYNMOUTH, NORTH DEVON.

Hogg having erroneously inferred from certain letters of the Shelley-Godwin correspondence, which he failed to read with lawyer-like care, that Shelley went from the neighbourhood of Rhayader to Lynmouth, in North Devon, in order to settle himself in a cottage belonging to a certain Mr. Eton, at the last-named place, he has been followed in one of the several errors of his book by Mr. MacCarthy, and other biographers, who are scarcely more clever in discovering mistakes in those pages of the lawyer's narrative, that are altogether accurate, than ready to rely on those of his statements that are seriously inexact. Instead of lying in Lynmouth, Mr. Eton's cottage lay in the neighbourhood of Tintern Abbey, as Hogg might have discovered from the letter in which William Godwin expressed his surprise and regret to Shelley that, after looking at the little house, he should have declined to take it on account of its smallness.

Mrs. William Godwin had suggested that the Shelleys should settle for a time in Mr. Eton's cottage near Tintern Abbey, and 'all the females' (to use Godwin's expression) of the Skinner-Street household 'were on the tiptoe to know,' whether the Shelleys would act on the suggestion, when the

postman laid on William Godwin's shop-counter a letter, addressed by Shelley's hand to Mr. Eton. As there could be no secrets from them, between Shelley and their friend, the curious and excited people in Skinner Street opened the epistle and read it, before passing it on to Mr. Eton. To Godwin's slight surprise, and to his wife's slight disappointment, the epistle announced that Shelley declined to take the cottage, because it was too small for his purpose. The consequence was that Godwin, whilst stating how the letter's purport came to his knowledge sooner than to Mr. Eton's cognizance, wrote to Shelley these words:—

‘I am a little astonished, however, with the expression in your letter, that “the insufficiency of house-room is a vital objection.” This would sound well to Mr. Eton from the eldest son of a gentleman of Sussex, with an ample fortune. But to me, I own, it a little alarms me. But you, my dear Shelley, have special motives for wariness in this matter, you are at variance with your father, and I think you say in one of your letters that he allows you only 200*l.* a-year. If by unnecessary and unconscientious expense you heap up embarrassments at present, how much do you think that will embitter your days and shackle your powers hereafter? Prudence, too, a just and virtuous prudence, in this most essential point, the dispensation of property, will do much to make you and your father friends: and why should you not be friends?’

The letter, from which these passages have been transcribed, is given in Hogg's book without date or address; but whilst the contents show it to have been written before Godwin had heard either of Shelley's arrival at Lynton, or of his intention to journey thither, the evidence is conclusive that it was addressed to Shelley at Chepstow;—a fact to be held in remembrance by the critical reader of the absurd passage of Mr. Denis Florence MacCarthy's very absurd book, in which it is suggested that the sharpness of Godwin's reflections (in the undated letter), on Shelley's manifest inclination to live beyond his means, was due to the philosopher's petty pique at the terms in which Shelley wrote to him, from Lynmouth, on 5th July, 1812, about Miss Hitchener's virtues and services to humanity.

Though he seldom says anything, that is comparable for absurdity with Mr. MacCarthy's wilder notes on Shelleyan questions, Hogg provokes ridicule by his animadversions on Godwin's undated letter. Insisting that it was for Shelley to decide whether the cottage was large enough for his purpose,

he smiles disdainfully at the impertinent busy-bodyism of Godwin's admonitory epistle, and insinuates that it would not have been written, had not the philosopher's temper been curiously ruffled by his young friend's audacity, in presuming to decline the modest mansion, which Mrs. Godwin had advised him to hire of one of her friends. On perusing the letter and reviewing all the circumstances that resulted in its composition, the discreet and impartial reader fails to discover the writer's ill-temper, or the grounds for charging him with exceeding the limits of the position, into which he had been drawn by his correspondent's repeated solicitations for parental counsel and guidance.

Had Godwin no grounds for thinking Shelley was disposed to live beyond his means? Shelley had himself told Godwin, that his allowance from his father was no more than 200*l.*; and the veteran of letters may at that time have had no reason for supposing that his young friend received any allowance from his father-in-law, or had any means in addition to the money from his father. At the most Shelley's precarious income was only 400*l.* a-year; and though Godwin probably thought it so much, he cannot have thought it more, and may have thought it less than that amount by one half. Immediately on coming to Nantgwillt, Shelley had invited the whole Godwin family (six persons, viz., Godwin, Mrs. Godwin, Fanny, Mary, Claire, and the small boy William) to visit him at Nantgwillt House. At the same time, Godwin had been informed by Shelley of his intention to invite another dear friend to stay with him at Nantgwillt during their sojourn with him. Godwin had no reason to suppose that he and his people and the one other dear friend (viz. Miss Hitchener) were all the persons, whom Shelley designed to entertain during the summer. On the contrary, he had reason to assume Shelley was no less hospitably disposed to old Oxford friends, and half-a-hundred other people, than to persons whom he had not yet seen. Some few weeks after receiving the invitation to Nantgwillt, Godwin is informed by Shelley that the smallness of Mr. Eton's cottage was a sufficient reason why he should not take it, the rooms being too few for the requirements of his family and friends. Godwin may well, under these circumstances, have come to the conclusion that his young friend—a minor, with certainly no more than 400*l.* a-year, set on taking a large house and filling it with company—was disposed to outrun the constable. At the same time,

it is conceivable that Godwin suspected the suddenness of Shelley's withdrawal from Nantgwillt House was due to financial distress. For (as I remarked in the last chapter) the sage of Skinner Street, with no information respecting the farm and its recent change of occupiers, may well have drawn the inference and entertained the suspicion, which Mr. Denis Florence MacCarthy (with better means of information) had no excuse for drawing and entertaining.

With these grounds for conceiving that Shelley was disposed to live beyond his means, it was creditable in Godwin that, at the risk of offending the young gentleman, he warned him to avoid the hurtful inconveniences of financial extravagance. In giving the advice, that was so needful, Godwin used no needlessly irritating language. Doubtless Godwin's marital sensitiveness would have been gratified, had Shelley decided to act on Mrs. Godwin's suggestion. Perhaps he was pained by Shelley's off-hand way of declining to act upon the lady's advice. But no passage of the epistle countenances the suggestion that the writer would have written otherwise, had he not been piqued by what he thought disrespectful to his wife's judgment. Neither impertinent in substance nor pettish in tone, the letter was in every respect a suitable epistle for Godwin to write to the young man, who, with every appearance of sincerity, had entreated the philosopher to enlighten his intellect and form his character. It is also to Godwin's honour that, whilst writing in a quasi-parental capacity to his singular correspondent, he reminded the young man that one of his first objects should be the recovery of his father's favour and affection.

Leaving the neighbourhood of Rhayader in the middle of June, 1812, the Shelleys journeyed to Tintern and Chepstow, and after looking at Mr. Eton's cottage between Tintern Abbey and Piercefield, proceeded to Lynmouth, North Devon. During their sojourn of nine weeks and three days in this locality, the trio lodged in a house, that standing in Lynton, on the hill above the fishing-village, was within a few hundred yards of the Valley of Rocks. In a letter, dated from 'Lynmouth, Valley of Stones, Sept. 19th, 1812,' Godwin wrote to his wife in London: 'Since writing the above, I have been to the house where Shelley lodged, and I bring good news. I saw the woman of the house, and I was delighted with her. She is a good creature, and quite loved the Shelleys. They lived here nine weeks and three

days;’—words that, giving us the length of the poet’s sojourn in the loveliest part of North Devon, point to the day on which the trio came to the charming spot, either by water from the Mouth of the Severn, or by land along the ridge of the Somerset coast. Speaking possibly from documentary evidence (though her ‘authentic sources’ of information are too often sources of error) Lady Shelley says, that the poet, with his attendant womankind, left Lynmouth on 31st August, 1812. If Lady Shelley is right on this point (and even Lady Shelley is right sometimes), Godwin was wrong by two days in writing on the 19th of September, ‘My Dear Love. The Shelleys are gone! Have been gone these three weeks.’ The philosopher may of course have thrown nineteen days into the round number of weeks; but I am slow to think this of the narrator who, with his customary exactness in small matters, is careful to record the precise number of days, by which Shelley’s stay in the lodgings, exceeded nine weeks.

When the trio had settled down in the lodging-house (situated in Lynton, though Shelley dated his letters from Lynmouth, which he spelt in accordance with local pronunciation), correspondence was renewed between Godwin and his young friend. Dating from North Devon on 5th July, 1812, before the philosopher’s expostulatory letter had come to his hands, Shelley wrote to the sage of Skinner Street:—

‘We were all so much prepossessed in favour of Mr. Eton’s house that nothing but the invincible objection of scarcity of room would have induced us, after seeing it, to resign the predetermination we had formed of taking it The expenses incurred by the failure of our attempt, in settling at Nantgwillt, have rendered it necessary for us to settle for a time in some cheap residence, in order to recover our pecuniary independence. I still hope that you and your estimable family will, before much time has elapsed, become inmates of our house. As soon as we recover our financial liberty, we mean to come to London.’

Two days later (7th July, 1812), when the expostulatory letter (forwarded from Chepstow) had been some twenty-four hours in his hands, Shelley again refers to the considerations which determined him to decline Mr. Eton’s house near Tintern Abbey, and ‘to seek an inexpensive retirement,’ in another part of the country. ‘It is a singular coincidence,’ he remarks, in the *second* of his letters from Lynmouth, to Godwin, ‘that in my

last letter I entered into details respecting my mode of life, and unfolded to you the reasons by which I was induced, on being disappointed in Mr. Eton's house, to seek an inexpensive retirement;—words that, even in the absence of other evidence to the point, should have preserved Hogg from putting Mr. Eton's cottage in Lynmouth. In the same epistle Shelley says, 'My letter, dated on the 5th,' (*i.e.* the day before the day on which he received the expostulatory letter) 'will prove to you that it is not to live in splendour, which I hate,—*not* to accumulate indulgences, which I despise, that my present conduct was adopted.' From this letter of the 7th July, it is obvious that Shelley did not regard Godwin as having overstept the privileges of his position, in expostulating with him on his pecuniary imprudence in the undated letter, which reached him only on the 6th, when his letter of the 5th was well on its way to Skinner Street. 'I feel my heart,' Shelley says on the 7th July, in reference to his previous letter of the 5th instant, 'throb exultingly when, as I read the misgivings in your mind concerning my rectitude, I reflect that I have to a certain degree refuted them by anticipation.' It never occurred to Shelley to take offence at the freedom of Godwin's expostulatory letter. It was enough for him, on the 7th of July, to exult in knowing that he had on the 5th answered by anticipation the principal matters of the epistle, before opening it on the 6th. The undated expostulatory letter, which thus travelled from London to Lynmouth, *via* Chepstow, and came to Shelley's hands at Lynmouth on the 6th July, cannot have left London later than the 2nd instant. It is more probable that Godwin wrote the epistle on one of the concluding days of June, than on the 1st or 2nd of July. Yet Mr. Denis Florence MacCarthy and other gentlemen, claiming as Shelleyan specialists a peculiar right to dogmatize on Shelleyan questions, insist that this particular epistle, which *cannot* have been posted later than the 2nd of July, would never have been written by Godwin, had not his vanity been acutely piqued by the passage of the letter, dated to him by Shelley on the 5th of July, in which he spoke with extravagant eulogy of the Hurstpierpoint schoolmistress, as a Deist and Republican, who openly instructed her little pupils in her religious and political views, and seemed to have formed her mind by the precepts of *Political Justice*, before it was her good fortune to peruse the pages of that immortal work.

Shelley was urgent in the same letter that Fanny Imlay, *alias* Wollstonecraft, *alias* Godwin, might be allowed to journey from London to Devonshire in Miss Hitchener's company, and stay with him and Harriett at Lynton till the autumn, when they would bring her back to Skinner Street. As Godwin had not educated the young lady, or any of the girls of his curiously composed family, in religious Free Thought, it is not surprising that Mary Wollstonecraft's illegitimate daughter was not allowed to travel from London to Lynmouth in the company of the Deistical schoolmistress, who joined the trio in North Devon some time about the middle of July. Though there is no conclusive evidence to the point, it has been no less reasonably than generally assumed, that this exemplary young schoolmistress brought with her to the Lynton cottage the large box of inflammatory literature, that had been opened at Holyhead, under circumstances and with consequences already set forth. Anyhow, it is certain that soon after her arrival at Lynton, Shelley had in his keeping at Lynton many copies of the printed compositions that were found in the big box by the Holyhead officials.

For some days Shelley may be presumed to have greatly enjoyed the society of the incomparable Portia (in Percy's little circle the Shakespearian spelling of the name seems to have been preferred to Porcia) who had at length broken away from Hurstpierpoint, and joined the little circle in which he could now be hopeful of finding happiness for ever. Readers may be left to imagine how the elated Percy escorted his dear Portia to the Valley of Rocks, and other especially picturesque scenes of the delightful region; how he discoursed with her on human perfectibility and other lofty themes in language very much beyond Harriett's comprehension; and how Portia hung on his words with philosophic acquiescence, that was something too adorative and manifestly acceptable to her husband for Mrs. Shelley to be altogether pleased by it, though she did her very best to think it all right and reasonable, and to regard Percy's incomparable female worshiper as a superlatively clever and good and charming woman. Readers may also be left to imagine how Miss Westbrook scrutinized her dearest Portia, studied her voice and manner, watched her movements, and took note of her philosophic utterances, whilst, even from the first day of their per-

sonal intercourse, she laid her plans for ejecting the dark-eyed and foreign-looking intruder from the little circle, which she entered for the gratification of only one of the three persons, who had joined in begging her to come to them. In those days of his unutterable felicity, far was Shelley from imagining how cordially he would, in a few months, hate the young woman, who had come all the way from Sussex to make him happy for ever. Miss Westbrook, however, would have been less cheerful and complaisant to Portia in the earlier weeks of their association, had she not been reasonably hopeful in July, that before the end of November Percy would have seen quite enough of his incomparable Miss Hitchener.

Memorable in the story of Shelley's life, as the place where he welcomed Portia to his domestic circle, Lynton is also memorable as the place where he busied himself with a literary enterprise, not unworthy of the young gentleman who had failed to regenerate Ireland with two pamphlets and a revolutionary broadside, and to demolish Christianity with a little syllabus. He had not been many days in North Devon before it occurred to the youthful enthusiast, that he could employ his leisure serviceably by sowing the seeds of revolutionary sentiment in Lynmouth and Barnstaple, and the several villages lying between the fishing-village whence he dated his letters, and the tranquil little borough whose inhabitants are pleased to style it 'the metropolis of North Devon.'

For some weeks he had been contemplating with disgustful abhorrence the circumstances, under which a man named Eaton had been tried and punished by Lord Ellenborough for printing and publishing the Third Part of Tom Paine's *Age of Reason*. This daring violator of law, with which as a printer and publisher he was quite familiar, had been indicted, tried, convicted, and sentenced in the ordinary way to undergo the severe punishment, to which he had rendered himself liable. Lord Ellenborough's connexion with the affair was, that it devolved on him, as Lord Chief Justice, to try the prisoner in the ordinary way of his official duty, and after the culprit's conviction to pass sentence upon him. Doubtless the Chief Justice was at pains to secure a conviction, because the evidence was conclusive, and the case a serious case; at least, in the opinion of the Chief Justice and the overwhelming majority of educated Englishmen. Doubtless, also, he passed a severe sentence, as

he would none the less have been bound to do, even had he secretly questioned the wisdom of the law he was required to administer. There is, of course, room for difference of opinion on the question whether the law, under which this person, Eaton, suffered a severe punishment, was politic, salutary, and therefore humane. But even in these days of general disapproval of laws for the restraint of religious opinion, there can be no question that Lord Ellenborough was bound to administer the law. To Shelley it appeared otherwise. Had the Chief Justice been at less pains to secure a conviction, and passed a somewhat lighter sentence on the culprit, Shelley would perhaps have been less stormily indignant; but he would have been no less certain that the judge had 'wantonly and unlawfully infringed the rights of humanity' in merely discharging a function of his office. It was not in Shelley's power to see that the main question of the case was not, whether Eaton had been guilty of an offence against natural morality; but whether he had been guilty of an offence against the law of the land. Discovering nothing to condemn, but, on the contrary, much to approve, in the publisher's action, on the score of natural morality, Shelley spoke and thought of Eaton as a wholly guiltless person. It followed by Shelley's logic that the judge who passed sentence on this guiltless person was a judge to be denounced as a ruthless persecutor of the innocent.

Taking this view of the matter, Shelley, on the eve of his withdrawal from Radnorshire (*vide* his letter of 11th June, 1812, to Godwin) was planning an Address to the public on the wickedness of the prosecution, and the iniquity of the judge.

The outline of the essay, begun in Radnorshire, was filled in as the writer made his leisurely progress to North Devon, where he put the last touches to the *Letter to Lord Ellenborough, occasioned by the Sentence which he passed on Mr. D. I. Eaton, as Publisher of the Third Part of Paine's Age of Reason*,—an essay which in respect to literary style, is a great advance on the author's previous prose writings, without containing a single passage to justify the praise lavished by the poet's idolaters on the perverse performance. The epistle having been touched in to his satisfaction, and most likely read to Portia (I adhere to Harriett's way of spelling the name), Shelley took the manuscript to Barnstaple and requested Mr. Syle, the principal bookseller and printer of the borough, to put it in type and furnish

him with a thousand copies. The matter, which the bookseller was thus commissioned to make into a printed pamphlet, was a strenuous and pungent libel on the Lord Chief Justice. Whilst the pamphlet was passing through the press, it appears from Mr. Chanter's *Sketches of the Literary History of Barnstaple*, that Shelley came from time to time to Mr. Syle's place of business, for the purpose of correcting proofs and revises. That Shelley journeyed to and fro between Lynton and Barnstaple for this purpose, there is no doubt in the mind of the present writer, who knows too much of his good friend, Mr. John Roberts Chanter, to be capable of questioning the accuracy of his written statements. The work, that was intended to cover Lord Ellenborough with historical infamy, seems to have been corrected for press to the last point as early as 16th August, 1812. Anyhow, on the 18th of that month the author dispatched from Lynmouth fifty copies of the *Letter* to his friend Mr. Hookham, of London, the Old-Bond-Street bookseller; saying with his pen, 'I enclose also two pamphlets which I printed and distributed whilst in Ireland some months ago (no bookseller daring to publish them). They were on that account attended with only partial success, and I request your opinion as to the probable result of publishing them with the annexed suggestions in one pamphlet, with an explanatory preface in London.' Had Shelley been so much more truth-loving than other men, as his idolaters declare him, he would have told Mr. Hookham that the failure of the two Irish pamphlets had been complete, instead of representing they had achieved a partial success. The statement that the pamphlets had been in some degree successful was a petty untruth, which is more than slightly offensive, from being told to the bookseller who was asked to reprint the two failures. The Shelley, who wrote on this matter of business to Mr. Hookham, was the same Shelley who planted the *Victor-and-Casire* piracies on Mr. Stockdale.

Before Mr. Hookham received the fifty copies of the *Letter to Lord Ellenborough*, much had taken place at Barnstaple. There was commotion in the 'metropolis of North Devon,' the fishing village beneath Lynton, and the petty townlets of the intervening seventeen miles. On a previous page a doubt was expressed whether Daniel Hill (*alias* Healey) attended the trio from Dublin to Holyhead. Whether the Irish lout accompanied

the trio to Radnorshire, waited upon them at Nantgwillt House, and travelled at their heels to North Devon *via* Chepstow, is questionable; but he certainly was in Shelley's service at Lynton soon after the three wanderers settled there. Certain also it is that Daniel Hill was employed by Shelley to distribute in North Devon the various literary performances, by which he hoped to revolutionize quietly the down-trodden, and far-too-contented peasants of that charming part of England, viz.:— (1) The comparatively innocuous *Proposals for an Association*, which had been composed for revolutionary use in England as well as Ireland; (2) *The Devil's Walk*, the poetical broadside (printed perhaps in Dublin) designed to bring the Prince Regent and his sycophants into universal contempt; and (3) the *Declaration of Rights* broadside, demonstrating sententiously that everyone has a plenitude of rights, with the exception of the Government, which is declared in the first four words of the *Declaration* to have no rights whatever.

Whilst the *Letter to Lord Ellenborough* was in Mr. Syle's hands, Daniel Hill found his chief occupation in distributing copies of these three publications. At the same time Daniel Hill, in the faithful execution of Shelley's orders, posted some of the broadsides on convenient walls and hoardings. It was Shelley's intention that Daniel Hill should in like manner distribute copies of the *Letter to Lord Ellenborough*. But it is not for every man to accomplish his intentions. Before he had been entrusted with copies of the libel on Lord Ellenborough, the Barnstaple magistrates laid Daniel Hill by the heels in the borough gaol on the 19th of August, whilst the fifty copies of the *Letter* were on the way to Mr. Hookham's shop in Old Bond Street.

It being Shelley's practice to be abundantly communicative respecting his birth, parentage, education, and quality, to all persons showing any curiosity in his proceedings, he had not been a fortnight in North Devon, before it was generally known in Lynmouth and Barnstaple that he was young Mr. Shelley, son of Mr. Timothy Shelley, M.P. for New Shoreham, and immediate heir (as honest Jack Lawless put the case) to one of the first fortunes of England. The proceedings of a young gentleman of such superior quality were of course fruitful of much gossip in the parishes visited by Daniel Hill, whose pamphlets and broadsides were the more interesting to mechanics, farmers,

and justices of the peace, because he was known to be the young gentleman's servant. Whilst gossips clacked to one another about the young gentleman's *Declaration of Rights* and *The Devil's Walk*, he was known to be in communication with Mr. Syle, of Barnstaple, and to have commissioned that enterprising bookseller to print something even more racy than those piquant broadsides. Compositors at press, in a small provincial town, who seldom work at 'copy' more diverting than auctioneers' catalogues or tradesmen's lists of prices, are apt to grow excited and loquacious when they are employed to put in type a smart electioneering squib, or a pamphlet for the discomfiture of a local dignitary. It was not in the nature of Mr. Syle's provincial journeymen and apprentices to be silent to their neighbours about the stinging letter to the Lord Chief Justice, which they were 'setting up.' Before the author had seen a first proof, the *Letter* was talked about in the parlours of the two contiguous taverns, where the political leaders of the borough met every evening of the week to confer on matters of Imperial or local politics. At the Whig tavern, feeling went in some degree with the youthful author of the daring essay; but at the adjoining house, where Tories held council, it was urged and agreed that measures should be taken promptly for the maintenance of social order, and the timely stay of seditious practices. By the chiefs of both parties it was agreed that young Mr. Shelley, even though he were the son of half-a-dozen Members of Parliament and heir to half-a-hundred baronetcies, should not be allowed to break the law in North Devon with impunity. Hence the arrest of the young gentleman's Irish servant.

From evidence preserved at *The Record Office*, it appears that the Barnstaple authorities acted in this business under guidance and instructions from the Solicitor to the Treasury. The publications being seditious, it was of course competent for the Ministry to proceed against Shelley, as the author and actual promulgator of the writings. That he was not proceeded against in his own name and person may have been due, in some degree, to regard for his father's feelings and respectability. Consideration also for the offender's youthfulness may have determined the powers to forbear from prosecuting the erratic stripling. But other considerations doubtless operated with the legal advisers of the Crown. It might be difficult to produce *legal* proof that Shelley was the author of the writings, or even

that he was their publisher. If it could not be proved to a jury that he was the actual instigator and director of his servant's political activity, the proceedings against him would result in miscarriage, discreditable to those who instituted them. Moreover, if his conviction could be secured, to prosecute him would magnify him into a martyr and make far too much of his puerile sauciness. To act as though the reputation of the Lord Chief Justice could be affected by a schoolboy's pen would not tend to stimulate the general reverence for the majesty of the law. Under these circumstances it was thought best to proceed only against the servant; but, whilst affecting to take no notice of the culprit in the background, to deal with the servant in such a manner that his youthful master should be punished.

Some of the seditious compositions, posted or otherwise dispersed by Daniel Hill, bore no printer's name; and it was provided by 39 George III. c. 79, section xxvii. that ' every person, who shall publish or disperse, or assist in publishing or dispersing, either *gratis* or for money, any printed Paper or Book, which shall have been printed after the passing of this Act, and on which the name and place of abode of the person printing the same shall not be printed as aforesaid, shall, for every copy of such paper so published or dispersed by him, forfeit and pay the sum of twenty pounds.' By the same statute it was further provided that every person convicted under it, who should neither pay the penalties nor be possessed of goods on which they could be levied, should forthwith be sent to prison 'for any time not exceeding six calendar months, nor less than three calendar months.' Hence it was possible to punish Daniel Hill, and through him to punish his master, without making too much of the dangerous character of the writings. Convicted in the Mayor's Court at Barnstaple, of publishing and dispersing Printed Papers in violation of 39 George III. c. 79, the Irish servant was sentenced to pay fines amounting to 200*l.* or go to prison for six months.

'Daniel Hill,' the town-clerk of Barnstaple wrote to Lord Sidmouth, when the case had been dealt with in this manner, 'has been convicted by the Mayor in ten penalties of 20*l.* each, for publishing and dispersing Printed Papers, 39 George III. c. 79, and is now committed to the common gaol of this Borough for not paying the penalties, and having no goods on which they could be levied.'

When the servant was fined thus heavily, the Mayor and

other acting magistrates assumed that the penalties would be paid by Shelley,—at once and on the spot, if he had so much money in hand; or in a few days should it be necessary for him to communicate with his father or lawyer, in order to put his servant at large. At the trial, Daniel Hill's defence was that he had meant no harm in posting the bills in accordance with the directions of 'the gentleman,' who had given him the broadsides for that purpose, and paid him 2s. 6d. for the job. Everyone in court, of course, smiled at the the poor fellow's attempt to make the magistrates believe, that the 'gentleman' was a stranger whom he had come upon accidentally between Lynton and Barnstaple, and that the day's work which had brought him to trouble was a solitary 'job' of casual employment; it being known alike to the Justices on the bench and the public in the body of the court, that the gentleman, who had set Daniel Hill to disperse the seditious bills, was Mr. Shelley, the Lynton lodger.

That young Mr. Shelley could not pay so large a fine at a moment's notice can have caused the borough magistrates no surprise. That Daniel Hill should pass a few days under penal discipline, whilst his master should be getting the money needful for his liberation, was probably desired by the municipal authorities, to whom it may well have appeared no less salutary than reasonable that, instead of going from the dock scot-free, he should endure for a week or so the wholesome rigour of offended justice. But for a few days, neither to the powers of the bench nor to the multitude living under their sway, did it appear probable that the servant would remain in durance for six calendar months, whilst the gentleman who had brought him to trouble escaped with perfect impunity. In bare justice to all that was generous in his faulty nature, it should be taken for certain that could he have paid them, either at once or by drawing money for the purpose from any source at his command, Shelley would have paid the cumulated fines as quickly as possible, even though they had amounted to 2000l. But he was no more able to lift Lynton in his palm and pitch it down upon Lynmouth, than to open the gate of Barnstaple's common gaol to his Irish varlet. What could he do for such a purpose? Instead of having 200l. at his command he could not just then have laid his hand on as many shillings, even though Harriett and Eliza, and the incomparable Portia, had given him the

contents of all their several pockets, to the last sixpence. Next quarter-day, when he hoped to 'recover his financial liberty' (his own elegant Micawberism), the young gentleman, of enterprises so disproportionate to his means, would come into possession of 100*l.* *minus* what he should have spent in the interim on his necessities. Already in debt to Mr. Syle of Barnstaple for printing the *Letter to Lord Ellenborough*, he was for the moment in such a stringent state of financial bondage, that he must either withdraw from the Lynton lodging-house at the end of the current week, or run in his landlady's debt for room-rent, bread, butter, milk, and vegetables. Over and beyond the several sums to be paid to the most urgent of his local creditors, should he linger in North Devon till Michaelmas, enough might remain to him of his next quarterly hundred pounds, to cover the charges of travelling to London and living till Christmas 1812. This was the extent of the 'financial liberty' for which he was longing. To whom could he apply for the money wherewith to pay the 200*l.* and costs? To his father?—his father's solicitor? He could not write for help to Hogg, whom he suspected, or at least had recently believed guilty, of trying to seduce Harriett. For failing to do what was completely out of his power, he is less to be blamed than commiserated. The poet's historian wishes he could record that in his inability to protect his servant with his purse, he stood by him manfully, declaring that the ignorant fellow had only obeyed his employer's order, and avowing himself the actual culprit; but this chivalric course was not taken by Shelley. He cannot be imagined to have found much enjoyment at Lynton, whilst Daniel Hill was undergoing punishment. On the contrary, regard being had to his sensibility and his mode of dealing with certain of its consequences, it may be assumed that he suffered from mental and bodily distress, which had an effect on the petty-cash receipts of the nearest dealer in laudanum.

When it appeared that the young gentleman, who had brought the ignorant Irishman into trouble, would altogether escape punishment, local sentiment passed to warmer indignation against the misdemeanant of superior social condition. Unmindful of his sentimental distress, 'society' came to the very wrong conclusion that he suffered nothing at all. Whilst Daniel Hill lived in the popular imagination as a poor fellow undergoing the rigour of prison discipline, the young gentleman

was supposed to be enjoying himself at Lynton. It was whispered that the magistrates had not acted rightly in dealing so hardly with the poor and ignorant man, whilst they allowed the rich and educated one to go scot-free. Though they had acted with the best intentions and under the best advice, the magistrates felt there had been a serious miscarriage of justice. To some of them it was consolatory to reflect that measures could still be taken for the punishment of the youthful libeller of the Lord Chief Justice.

That it was in contemplation to proceed against the author and printer of the *Letter to Lord Ellenborough*, or at least that the talk of Barnstaple turned on proceedings for their punishment, may be inferred from Mr. Syle's alarm and vain endeavours to recover the fifty copies of the *Letter*, delivered to Shelley a day or two before Daniel Hill's arrest. Alarmed by the arrest, Mr. Syle was quick to destroy all copies of the pamphlet lying in his office; the *Letter to Lord Ellenborough* being the third (possibly, the fourth) of Shelley's juvenile productions to be suppressed by a panic-struck printer.

My good friend, Mr. Chanter, of Barnstaple, is certain that Mr. Syle had several interviews with Shelley, in order to recover the fifty copies of the *Letter* which had been sent to London. It is needless to say that these 'several interviews' were unsatisfactory to Mr. Syle. It may be assumed that to account for his refusal to surrender the printed copies, Shelley declared his inability to restore them, as they had already passed from his keeping. As the printer would have thought it worth his while to be at much pains and cost to follow the fifty copies or any one of them, it may be assumed that he asked Shelley, whither they had gone,—to whom and by whom they had been distributed. Having a strong opinion that they had not been distributed by Daniel Hill, on whose person none of the *Letters* had been found, Mr. Syle had good reason for thinking that, if they had really passed from Shelley's hands, they must have been dispersed either by the writer himself or the ladies of his party. We may, therefore, be sure that Shelley was pressed strongly to give or procure precise information respecting the circumstances of their distribution. With equal confidence it may be assumed that Shelley withheld from the printer, that the fifty copies had been sent to Mr. Hookham. Writing from information, that came to him directly or indirectly from persons concerned in printing

the libellous writing, Mr. Chanter says, 'He' (i.e. Mr. Syle) 'at once suppressed and destroyed the remaining sheets, and had several interviews with Shelley to endeavour to get back the ones previously delivered, but unsuccessfully, as they had been mostly distributed' :—words implying a gradual distribution in the neighbourhood. Had Shelley told the printer what had been done with the pamphlets, it would scarcely have lived in local tradition, that they had been dispersed in the manner indicated by Mr. Chanter's words. Moreover, on discovering what trouble might come to him from the affair, Shelley (a capital keeper of a secret he was interested in keeping) had a good reason for withholding from the Barnstaple tradesman a piece of information, which he might under pressure and for his own safety communicate to the magistrates of the borough, with consequences inconvenient to Mr. Hookham and Mr. Hookham's correspondent.

The evidence that Shelley's withdrawal from North Devon was connected with the stir and ferment occasioned by the publication of seditious literature, is only circumstantial; but it is such strong evidence of its weak kind that few readers will think it insufficient for the conclusion, to which it has brought the present writer. Settled at Lynton, with the purpose of remaining there till by economical living he should have recovered his 'financial liberty'—i.e. till next quarter-day—Shelley likes his lodgings and his landlady, and in various ways seems confirmed in his resolve to stay there for several weeks; when within twelve days or a fortnight he moves hurriedly into another county, lying well away from Devon. Making this migration soon after his servant's arrest, he makes it at a moment when people are saying he ought to be sent to Barnstaple Gaol to keep Daniel Hill company, and the Barnstaple bookseller is fearful of being prosecuted for *publishing* what his customer has *written*.

The prosecution of which Mr. Syle was fearful would have been a prosecution in which he, as publisher, would have been associated in the dock with Shelley, as author. Had Mr. Syle's alarm been justified by the event, he and Shelley would have been tried together. All that Mr. Syle feared for himself, Shelley had reason to fear for himself. Is it to be supposed that, whilst the bookseller was agitated with terror, Shelley,—a youthful, nervous, excitable laudanum-drinker,—was free from

fear? At this moment of terror, and real or imaginary peril, Shelley runs along the coast from Lynton to Ilfracombe, and crossing the water with his three female companions gets into Wales. This flight is made at a moment when there are stringent pecuniary reasons why they should remain at Lynton. Surely here is a body of circumstantial evidence strong enough to justify something more than a strong suspicion that in running from North Devon to Wales, Shelley was impelled by apprehension of the same legal proceedings, which poor Mr. Syle was anticipating with terror! In North Devon he was liable to arrest at any moment. In South Wales he would be secure from immediate seizure. Hidden in a secluded corner of Carmarthenshire, he would not be easily tracked and discovered.

The flight had been made something less than three weeks, when William Godwin, relying on his young friend's frequent and pressing invitations, determined to pay him a visit at Lynton. Mounting coach in London, the philosopher travelled smoothly enough to Bristol, whence he passed over stormy waters to Lynmouth, enduring discomforts (scarcely to be imagined in these luxurious days) during the trip, so humorously touched upon by Hogg, and so graphically described by the voyager himself. After recovering from sea-sickness the disappointed traveller gave his wife some particulars, which he was pleased to call 'good news,' respecting the erratic people, whom he had hoped to find near the Valley of Rocks. He had seen the worthy woman, in whose house the Shelleys had lodged for nine weeks and three days. Leaving Lynton precipitately, the Shelleys had gone off in debt to their landlady and two other people: in debt to her for room-rent and necessaries, and for 29s. of borrowed money, besides 3l., which she had induced a neighbour to lend them. Godwin erred in thinking the fugitives had been constrained to borrow this 4l. 9s., because they could not get change at Lynmouth for the two halves of a bank-note; for at the moment of running off, they had not received the second half of the divided note. It delighted Godwin to observe the affectionate warmth with which the landlady spoke of her late lodgers; and he was pleased at learning from her, that they would be in London in a fortnight.

In their desire to get away from Lynton as quickly as possible,

the four friends left Lynton in debt, and could not have left it so soon, had they not induced two of the villagers to lend them four pounds and nine shillings. One of the adventurers (probably Shelley) was in possession of the one half of a bank-note, the second half of the divided paper having not yet come to hand. From what source this note came does not appear. It looks as though Shelley had written to some friend for a small loan to enable him to escape quickly from a perilous position, and that the half-note in hand was the first half of a consequent remittance. Anyhow it points to the precipitateness of the departure, that the fugitives did not like to wait till the post should bring the second half of the negotiable paper. Hastening off with the half-note and borrowed money the adventurers went to Ilfracombe, whence they returned the four pounds and nine shillings to the two several lenders,—3*l.* to Mrs. Hooper's friend, and 29*s.* to the landlady herself, to whom they had given 'a draft upon the Honourable Mr. Lawleys, brother to Lord Cloncurry,' for the full payment of the amount in which they were indebted to her. There is no doubt that the gentleman so strangely misdescribed was 'honest Jack,' who was nothing more than a distant relation to Lord Cloncurry. The draft is not in evidence to show whether honest Jack was so suspiciously misdescribed on the document itself; but it cannot be questioned that the simple lodginghouse-keeper had been talked into believing that the order for payment, instead of being addressed to a penniless *littérateur*, was drawn upon a personage of social importance.

I wish I could think honest Jack had not been so misdescribed to this simple soul of a North Devon village, in order that she should the more readily be induced to accept the dubious draft in payment of her little account. Mr. Denis Florence MacCarthy remarks jocosely on this business, 'We trust that the good Mrs. Hooper of Lynmonth was not kept out of her money until the "enormous profits" which Shelley so sanguinely expected from the publication of *The History of Ireland* were realized.' Even at this remoteness from the end of the poor woman's earthly cares the reader of this page may well repeat seriously what Mr. MacCarthy says jestingly; for many a poor widow has been brought to the workhouse by her simplicity in taking a worthless cheque from a lodger, who ought to have paid what he promised to give her—ready money.

For the present enough has been said of Shelley's reasons for wishing to leave North Devon, and of the manner of his flight. Enough has been said to show how far Lady Shelley is justified in ascribing the poet's abrupt withdrawal from Lynton to Tanyrallt, altogether to 'the restlessness of his disposition.'

CHAPTER VI.

NORTH WALES AND THE SECOND IRISH TRIP.

William A. Madocks—The Tremadoc Embankment—Shelley's Zeal for the People of Tremadoc—His big Subscription to the Embankment Fund—Tanyrallt Lodge—Shelley in London—Sussex Selfishness—The Reconciliation with Hogg—Miss Hitchener in Disgrace—She is banished from 'Percy's Little Circle'—Brown Demon and Hermaphroditical Beast—Shelley in Skinner Street—Claire and Mary—Fanny Imlay's Intercourse with Shelley—The Worth and Worthlessness of Claire's Evidence—Shelley's Prodigality—Back at Tanyrallt—At Work on *Queen Mab*—At War with Neighbours—Embankment Annoyances—Livelier Delight in Harriett—Wheedling Letter to the Duke of Norfolk—Diet and Dyspepsia—The Hunts in trouble—Shelley's Contribution for their Relief—The odious Leeson—Daniel Hill's liberation from Prison—His Arrival at Tanyrallt Lodge—The Tanyrallt Mystery—Shelley's marvellous and conflicting Stories—Exhibition of the Evidence—Inquisition and Verdict—Shelley's ignominious Position—His virtuous Indignation at the World's Villany—His undiminished Concern for Liberty and Virtue—His Withdrawal from Wales to Ireland—He hastens from Dublin to Killarney—Hogg in Dublin—The Shelleys back in London.

(4.)—TANYRALLT, CARNARVONSHIRE, N.W.

In default of data, by which their course could be traced precisely, the historian can only say of the movements of the four adventurers between Ilfracombe and Tremadoc, that they appear to have arrived at the latter place without greatly exceeding the time that would be usually spent by tourists in a trip from North Devon, across the Bristol Channel, and onwards from Cardiff to Carnarvon. Readers will not be far wrong in assuming that on the day of William Godwin's arrival at Lynmouth (18th September, 1812), his young friend had been two or three days at Tremadoc. Either from the moment of his arrival at Tremadoc, or from a quickly following day, Shelley was for some time in a scene of excitement that diverted his mind from the painful circumstances of his flight from Lynton. In September, 1812, an unusually high tide swept away portions of the breakwater and embankment, that had been raised a few years earlier by a considerable landowner

of the neighbourhood (William A. Madocks, Esq., Fellow of All Souls' College, Oxford, and Member of Parliament) for the preservation of lands, which he was set on reclaiming from the sea. The immediate consequence of the injury to the insufficient works was a flood that, sweeping across the imperfectly reclaimed lands, inflicted much suffering and loss on humble tillers and other occupants of the soil. Whether the flood preceded, or followed Shelley's arrival at Tremadoc by a few days, or was precisely coincident with it, does not appear; but it is certain that he was deeply stirred by the results of the calamity.

Commiserating the poor people, driven from their tenements by the sea, he sympathized also with the wealthier sufferers. Approaching Mr. Madocks, seignior of Tremadoc, and Mr. Williams, the great man's agent, with appropriate expressions of concern for the trouble that had befallen them and their dependents, Shelley explained to them *more suo*, that he was the eldest son of Mr. Timothy Shelley, of Field Place, in the county of Sussex, and eventual inheritor of the baronetcy and broad acres of his grandfather, Sir Bysshe Shelley. At present a minor, with his hands tied as the hands of minors ever are, he was in the twenty-first year of his minority; but next August, on attaining his majority, he should be in a position to contribute handsomely to the fund that must be raised to restore Tremadoc to prosperity. In fact, he spoke to the gentlemen of Tremadoc just such brave words of himself, as a few months since had caused honest Jack Lawless to write of him as the immediate heir to one of the first fortunes of England, and a young gentleman who would do great things for the benefit of Ireland.

It is not wonderful that the Tremadoc gentry were caught by these promises of assistance. A man of politics and affairs, a Fellow of All Souls, and a student of human nature, Mr. Madocks saw the young man's enthusiasm was sincere, and knew just enough of his history to have no hesitation in taking the young gentleman, at his own valuation. It was not for Mr. Madocks to cross-examine the young gentleman who spoke so frankly of his parentage and prospects. In truth, there was nothing in Shelley's talk to move either Mr. Madocks, or his local agent (Mr. Williams), to suspicion. Young gentlemen often come into easy circumstances on coming of age, even though they must wait for their father's estates. Sir Bysshe

Shelley had the reputation of being the wealthiest commoner of his county. The whole House of Commons knew the Member for New Shoreham would, in the usual course of things, succeed to great wealth. What more natural than for the eldest son of so considerable a squire, the grandson of so wealthy a baronet, to step into money on the attainment of his majority?

By the elders of Tremadoc a scheme, that showed excellently on paper, was devised for the future security and welfare of the town. The old breakwater and embankment having proved ineffectual for the protection of the imperfectly reclaimed five thousand acres of land, it was determined to build a stronger and more imposing embankment, and make on its top a coach-road, that, uniting two Welsh counties, would be advantageous to England and Ireland, as well as Wales, by shortening the journey from Dublin to Bath and London. There being no question with the projectors respecting the fertility of the land, if it could be duly guarded from the salt-water, it was estimated that the four or five thousand acres of reclaimable soil would soon yield a rental of from 8000*l.* to 10,000*l.* a-year. These advantages would result from an embankment, made at an estimated cost of 20,000*l.*

To practical critics it may appear that, unless this scheme were not based on misconception, the owners of the reclaimable land must have been strangely neglectful of their interests. To the same critics it may seem that, as the embankment would yield a revenue of from 8000*l.* to 10,000*l.* a-year to the owners of the land, they were the persons to provide the 20,000*l.* To the Tremadoc elders, however, it appeared only reasonable that the capital, to be so expended for the enrichment of these landowners, should be provided by all persons of the general public, wishing well to Tremadoc and the United Kingdom, of which Tremadoc was part. It does not appear what interest, or whether any interest, was to be paid for money advanced by subscribers. From the way in which she commends Shelley for the largeness of his subscription, it is obvious Lady Shelley regards the moneys proffered by subscribers as differing in no respect from moneys given to a benevolent enterprise.

Shelley thought that the landowners, who would be so greatly benefited by the embankment, should be invited to subscribe liberally. Acting on this view, the impetuous minor assailed several of the neighbouring gentry with personal en-

treaties for money, for the good cause;—entreaties he could make with a good grace, since, to set richer folk a good example, he had headed the subscription list 'with a donation' (says Lady Shelley) 'of 500*l.*, though his means, as the reader has seen, were small.' It was, doubtless, understood by Messrs. Madocks and Williams, that the young gentleman should not be asked to pay anything for this spirited stroke of his pen, until he should have entered on the financial plenitude, that would follow the attainment of his majority. At the same time the enthusiastic youth undertook to gather subscriptions in his native county, and more especially from his friend, the Duke of Norfolk.

Seeing how set Shelley was on furthering the interests of Tremadoc, it was only natural for Mr. Madocks to have pleasure in letting his young friend a certain furnished cottage at Tanyrallt. Called a cottage, Tanyrallt Lodge differed greatly from the tenement in which the adventurers had been lodging at Lynton. A cottage of gentility, with a billiard-room and circumambient lawns, this lodge almost justified Shelley in writing of it to Hogg, as 'a cottage extensive and tasty enough for the villa of an Italian Prince.' Good taste, of course, forbade the Lord of Tremadoc to name a rent beneath the dignity of a tenant who, besides being a gentleman of quality, would soon be in easy circumstances. Even Shelley thought the rent 'large, but,' as he wrote with winning candour to Hogg, 'it is an object with us that they allow it to remain unpaid till I am of age.' The place was worth the deferred rent; and the landlord lived with his tenant on the friendliest terms; speaking to him confidentially of the descent of Madockses, of Tremadoc, from Prince Madoc, and doubtless listening with proper interest to his youthful tenant's stories of the Shelleys of olden time, and the ancient snake of the Field Place gardens. At the same time Mrs. Madocks and Miss Westbrook became fast friends, after the wont of gentlewomen, who conceive it is to their interest to be very intimate with one another.

Shelley had done well for himself and his attendant gentlewomen in migrating from North Devon to Carnarvonshire, and throwing himself so impetuously into the embankment business. At Tanyrallt he and they lived (pleasantly for awhile) with the best people of the neighbourhood; and enjoyed the change of

scene and society all the more, because in pre-railway days Tremadoc was too far a call from Lynton, for them to fear the talk of the Lynmouth tattlers would come to the ears of the quality round about Tanyrallt. But an altogether wrong view is taken of the position by readers, who question the genuineness of Shelley's affection for Tremadoc, or suspect him of entertaining his new friends with hopes he intended to disappoint. For the moment he was quite as earnest for the new breakwater as a few months before he had been for Catholic Emancipation. He had been for so long a time looking to the attainment of his majority as a point of his existence, when he should be able to make better terms with his father, or raise money at a comparatively easy rate on his expectations, that he was quite honest in speaking of his coming of age, as a time when he should be able to give 500*l.* to the Tremadoc embankment, and pay the deferred rent for Tanyrallt Lodge. The impetuous and imaginative young man had fairly talked himself into conceiving, that to raise a handsome sum for the embankment fund he had only to carry the subscription list to the Duke of Norfolk and his other friends in Sussex.

(5.)—LONDON: ST. JAMES'S COFFEE-HOUSE.

Soon (say ten days or a fortnight) after taking possession of the Tanyrallt Lodge, Shelley went to London with the ladies of his party. The authorities are at variance respecting the objects, incidents, or duration of this visit. Hogg, who knew nothing of Shelley's frequent visits to Godwin during this period, seems to have been under the impression that Shelley's first act, after coming to town, was to seek him out; whereas the interview of reconciliation did not take place till the poet had been at least four weeks in town. Working on Hogg's misconception, and his own erroneous assumption that Shelley must have left London for Tanyrallt on Thursday, 12th November, because, on the previous Saturday, he intended doing so, Mr. Denis Florence MacCarthy concludes that Shelley's 'brief visit' to town 'lasted little more than a week,' and that Hogg dined with the Shelleys only on one occasion during the visit; whereas the visit exceeded six weeks by a single day, and Hogg dined twice with the Shelleys at the St. James's Coffee-house. With respect to the length of the stay in London, Mr. Kegan Paul is wrong only by a single day. Lady Shelley, of course, makes several

mistakes about the business. (1) Speaking of Shelley's exertions for the Tremadoc embankment, she says, 'But he did not allow his zeal to stop even here; for, accompanied by his wife, he hurried up to London to obtain further succour.' He was accompanied by Miss Hitchener and Miss Westbrook, as well as his wife; and he went to town on other matters besides the Tremadoc embankment. (2) Speaking of the poet's intercourse with the author of *Political Justice*, Lady Shelley says, 'During his visit to London, Shelley made the personal acquaintance of Godwin, with whom he lived for a time;' whereas it is certain that, though calling frequently on Godwin and becoming very intimate with the Skinner Street family, Shelley slept at the St. James's Coffee-house. (3) Speaking of Shelley's intercourse with Fanny Imlay, Lady Shelley calls her Fanny Godwin, says she was 'the philosopher's daughter,' and adds in a note that 'Fanny Godwin was the only sister of Shelley's second wife;' whereas Mary Wollstonecraft's illegitimate daughter, by Gilbert Imlay, had no right to Godwin's surname, was *not* the philosopher's daughter, and was only the illegitimate uterine sister of Shelley's second wife. It is curious to observe how, whilst pushing poor Claire out of all sisterly relation to Shelley's second wife, whose sister-by-affinity she unquestionably was, Lady Shelley affiliates Mary Wollstonecraft's illegitimate child on William Godwin, and promotes her to the dignity of being whole-sister of Shelley's second wife. (4) Speaking of Fanny's death, Lady Shelley says the poor girl 'died early in 1815.' Lady Shelley is doubly wrong in these few words; for Fanny did not die in 1815, nor did she die early in any year. She killed herself on 9th October, 1816.

Hurrying up to London (to use Lady Shelley's expression) Shelley took rooms at the St. James's Coffee-house, and whilst in town accomplished several objects that had quite as much to do with his trip to the capital, as his avowed purpose of winning subscribers to the Tremadoc embankment. He left Lynton with the intention of being in London in a fortnight. Set on making Godwin's personal acquaintance, he also wished for reconciliation to Hogg. From the fact that he was a month in town before seeking him out, it may not be inferred that the poet's desire for intercourse with his college friend was a feeble inclination. Shelley knew enough of the lawyers and their haunts to be aware that he should be only wasting his time in hunting for

Hogg, before the barristers and students of the Four Inns had returned to town for Michaelmas Term. He had good reason to think that Hogg, a man of rural birth and nurture, would be slaughtering pheasants till the end of the Long Vacation. Arriving in London on Sunday, 4th October, 1812, Shelley lost no time in going to Skinner Street, because he knew Godwin would be there. Whilst going, almost daily for several weeks, to Skinner Street, he kept away from the Inns of Court, till he could hope to find Hogg in one of them. On the opening of the Michaelmas Term he hastened to the Inns, discovered his old friend's lodgings, and rushed in upon him at night, in the manner already set forth in these pages. As Hogg 'returned from the country at the end of October, 1812' (*vide* Hogg's *Life*, Vol. ii., p. 165), Shelley might have found his old friend a day or too earlier; but he was right in thinking he would waste his time and pains in hunting for him much sooner.

For any good he could do the projectors of the embankment Shelley might as well have stayed at Tanyrallt. In promising to do much for them he had 'talked too fast,'—a fault of which youthful and impetuous persons of both sexes are often guilty; and in due course he was punished for his fast *talk* by the annoyance that came to him from the pressure, put upon him to *do* something in fulfilment of his brave words. From one of his letters it seems that he made some faint attempts to get subscribers to the embankment fund in Sussex. Possibly he wrote to his uncle Pilfold and Mr. Medwin on the subject; but it is certain he received neither from them nor any one else in the county any assistance for the great scheme. 'I see,' he wrote to Mr. Williams of Tremadoc from the St. James's Coffee-house on 7th November, 1812, 'no hope of effecting, on my part, any grand or decisive scheme until the expiration of my minority,'—words comically indicative of the grand and decisive things he had promised to do for Tremadoc, as soon as he should come of age. In Sussex he met with no encouragement. The cold and unsympathetic animals of his native shire cared only for eating, drinking, and sleeping. But his fervid hopes, ardent desires, and unremitting personal exertions, were all engaged for the great cause of the Tremadoc embankment, 'which he would desert but with his life':—a declaration not unworthy of Mr. Micawber in his happiest moments.

At the date of this letter Shelley had not seen, nor does he

appear to have written to, his particular friend, the Duke of Norfolk, on the enterprise for benefiting owners of property in and near Tremadoc; for he says in the epistle, 'The Duke of Norfolk has just returned to London. I shall call upon him this morning, and shall spare no pains in engaging his interest, or perhaps his better feelings, in our and our country's cause.' If Shelley talked to the Duke of the Tremadoc embankment in the style in which he wrote about it to the Welsh agent, his Grace of Norfolk must have found it difficult to refrain from laughing outright at the youngster.

Though it is questionable whether Shelley journeyed from Tanyrallt to London with a clear purpose of dismissing Miss Hitchener from his little circle, before he should return to the Principality, there are grounds for a strong opinion that he did not travel with Portia from Lynton to Tremadoc, without discovering she was by no means the angelic person he had formerly imagined her. At Lynton, where she was mistaken for a foreigner, whilst climbing the cliffs with her Percy, this tall, thin, rather bony, somewhat masculine, slightly bearded, perceptibly moustached, all too swarthy, far too loquacious young woman had for some time retained her power over Shelley, and even given promise of drawing Harriett under her sway:—facts that did not soften Miss Westbrook to the brown-eyed and brown-skinned intruder. Before they stole away from Lynton, Portia and Eliza were at war, more often open than covert, with one another. Touring under the most favourable circumstances is necessarily attended with conditions likely to try the tempers of imperfectly congenial fellow-travellers; and the journey of the four adventurers from North Devon to North Wales cannot have disposed the ladies-at-war to think less bitterly of each other. Whilst the schoolmistress thought Eliza no worthy member of 'Percy's little circle,' the gentlewoman, whose papa belonged to the highest grade of licensed victuallers, thought any circle too good for the talkative woman, whose father kept a common ale-house. It is not strange, therefore, that in London, if not at Tanyrallt, Shelley decided to banish Portia from his little circle for ever.

On receiving this sentence of extrusion, Portia turned upon her poet with a demand for pecuniary compensation. Wanting, though it must be declared, in the delicacy and highmindedness, appropriate to an incomparable Portia, this demand by a

provincial innkeeper's daughter was not unreasonable. The demandant's case was this:—'When you crossed my path I had the respect of my neighbours, and a school by which I made a decent livelihood, both of which valuable things I surrendered at your earnest entreaty that I would come to you and live with you *for ever*. I did not force myself on you. On the contrary, I declined your pressing invitations to come to you in Ireland. Instead of hastening to you in Wales, I asked you to come to me at Hurstpierpoint. I should not have joined you in North Devon, had you not persuaded me you could never be happy without me. A few months of it have sufficed to make you weary of my company; and now you have had all the amusement I am capable of affording you, you tell me to be off. At least, you should help me to place myself in as good a position as the one I surrendered at your request and for your pleasure.' Shelley could not deny there was justice in the demand. To be quit of her without further quarrelling, he promised to make her an allowance. What he engaged to give in quarterly payments does not appear; but he may be assumed to have promised her forty or fifty pounds a-year. This matter having been settled, it was arranged that Miss Hitchener should spend Sunday, 15th November, 1812, with the trio—dining with them at the St. James's Coffee-house, and bidding them farewell for ever, at the close of the evening.

Calling on the morning of that same Sunday at the St. James's Coffee-house to see his friends, Hogg was pressed to be the fifth person at the farewell dinner. Shelley being precluded from walking with him by some special engagement, and Harriett being a sufferer from headache, that made her other than the bright and blooming Harriett with whom he had dined at the same hotel a few days earlier, Hogg was on this occasion induced to attend Eliza and Portia for a promenade in the parks before dinner. Nothing droll can be found in Hogg's book than his account of his walk in the parks with the brown demon (Miss Hitchener) on his right arm, and the black diamond (Miss Westbrook) on his left. Moving between the belligerent women, Hogg had reason to admire the tone of haughty contempt with which the Black Diamond tossed her insults at the Brown Demon, and the meek contumacy with which Miss Hitchener returned her enemy's fire. For awhile the fighting was sharp; but in little more than half-an-hour

the victory was with the Brown Demon, whose galling meekness and poisonous malice fairly silenced her insolent foe. The Black Diamond turning sulky and silent, Hogg gave his ear for the rest of the walk to the Brown Demon, who poured from her bearded lips the stream of gentle eloquence that afforded him new views on the rights of women.

On their return from this pleasant 'airing' in the parks, as they were crossing the threshold of the St. James's Coffee-house, Miss Eliza Westbrook said viciously to Hogg, 'How could you talk to that nasty creature so much? How could you permit her to prate so long to you? Why did you encourage her? Harriett will be seriously displeased with you, I assure you; she will be very angry!'

True to her mission, Portia strove to illuminate Percy's little circle to the last moment of her connexion with it. Hogg happening to refer to the rights of the gentler sex, Miss Hitchener reopened her parable after tea and discoursed eloquently on the high theme, even to the moment of the arrival of the hackney-coach, which had been summoned to remove her from her auditors for ever. Whilst the lady was delivering this final oration, Percy quitted his chair, and taking up a position before her drank-in the musical utterances of her wisdom with a comical show of approval.

If Shelley softened to Portia at the moment of parting, the weakness was transient; for he soon learnt to speak as well as think of her with a resentment that might almost be styled ferocious. As the hour approached for the first of the quarterly payments he rose to rage at the mere thought of the hateful creature.

'The Brown Demon,' he wrote to Hogg from Tanyrallt on 3rd December, 1812, 'as we call our late tormentor and schoolmistress, must receive her stipend. . . . She is an artful, superficial, ugly, hermaphroditical beast of a woman, and my astonishment at my fatuity, inconsistency, and bad taste, was never so great, as after living four months with her as an inmate. What would Hell be, were such a woman in Heaven?'

'*Hermaphroditical beast of a woman!*' Surely these are strangely strong words for a chivalric gentleman to apply to a woman, whatever her failings may have been!

Whatever disappointments Shelley encountered during this sojourn in London, none of them can have come to him from his

treatment in Skinner Street. Welcomed by Godwin with open arms, Shelley entered at once on personal relations with the philosopher, that accorded in every particular with the relations they had maintained towards one another by written words. Coming to the eminent man of letters for sympathy, counsel, and instruction, Shelley received what he sought. So much pitifully snobbish stuff has been written about the intercourse of William Godwin and Shelley, as though the author of *Political Justice* was greatly honoured and his dwelling glorified by the visits of the heir to a Sussex baronetcy, that it is necessary to remind the reader of the relation which Godwin condescended to hold towards Shelley, and of the relation in which Shelley was reasonably proud to stand in towards Godwin. The position of Godwin towards Shelley was that of a teacher, patron, benefactor. The position of Shelley towards Godwin was that of a pupil and worshiper. And it is to the credit of both that each of the scholars occupied his respective position gracefully, till one of them was guilty of perhaps the wildest extravagance of domestic treason recorded in the annals of men of letters. Whilst Godwin's condescension and kindness to his youthful *protégé* had no tincture of arrogance, Shelley's acknowledgments of his teacher's kindness were rendered in terms of generous homage and grateful devotion.

At the same time Godwin's house was open at all hours to Shelley. Let it be observed (for the servility of certain writers requires the clear statement of a matter about which good taste would rather be silent) that, though the Godwins were far from prosperous, the Skinner-Street household was a family no man of culture and sensibility could enter without feeling himself in the home of gentle people. If Godwin looked like a Dissenting minister, and showed signs of his lowly origin, to look into his eyes and to listen to his speech was to recognize a man of unusual intellect. A woman of gentle birth and literary achievements, Mrs. Godwin, somewhat too stout for elegance but none too massive for matronly dignity, was a bright, clever, vivacious, charming woman in society, though she had a faulty temper. Possessing no facial beauty apart from the agreeable expression of her countenance, the eldest daughter of the house (Fanny Imlay) had the voice, carriage, and air of an agreeable and well-mannered young gentlewoman. Charles Clairmont was at Edinburgh when Shelley made the personal acquaintance of the

Skinner-Street Godwins; but had the old Charterhouse boy, of comely face and quick brain, been at home in the October and November of 1812, Shelley would have met a young man, qualified by nature and training for an honourable career. Godwin's son by his second wife was a promising little fellow. The fifteen-years-old damsels, Claire and Mary, were already coming into possession of the wit and personal attractiveness that distinguished them a few years later. Mainly dependent though they were for their food and raiment and pleasures on the shop, over which they had their home, the members of this curiously composed family might be rated with the *bourgeoisie* from one point of view; but in manner, taste, tone, intellectual interests and aspirations, they were as much gentle people as Shelley's more fortunate relatives.

Beyond thinking them a pair of bright and winsome children, Shelley in the autumn of 1812 does not seem to have taken much notice of Claire and Mary; but the evidence is abundant that he was no less strongly than agreeably interested in Fanny Imlay. Being thus interested in her, it was a matter of course with Shelley to press her to correspond with him, in order that he might know her more intimately, and contribute to the development of her intellectual and moral nature. Probably he invited her to a correspondence, in the hope that her letters would prove a sufficient substitute for the diverting letters he had for so many months received from the Brown Demon, whose longest epistles for the future would be a mere acknowledgment of her quarterly stipend, should it ever be paid to her. Instead of accepting this invitation with alacrity, Fanny Imlay demurred to the proposal on considerations of propriety. She would have accepted such an invitation from Harriett with glee, but hesitated to enter on a sentimental correspondence with Harriett's husband; the hesitation being due to scruples, that would not have troubled her, had she been educated in accordance with the theories and proposals of her mother's *Rights of Woman*. These scruples were not the less influential with Fanny in December of 1812, because she had good reason to think that Shelley and Mrs. Shelley, after enjoying the free run of the Skinner-Street house during their stay in town, showed her father and mother scant courtesy in returning to Wales, without bidding them good-bye.

Notwithstanding his practice of asking young women to cor-

respond with him, Shelley would scarcely have asked Fanny to write to him, without feeling an interest in her. Nor is it probable that he made the request, without thinking he had rendered himself an object of her friendly regard. Instead of indicating indifference, the hesitancy she displayed in acceding to his entreaty may be regarded as evidence, that she was conscious of feeling too warmly for the young man, who after throwing himself on her family for sympathy and social diversion, had gone away from them so lightly. Her resentment of his neglect to render her family the courtesy of a formal adieu, may also be taken as evidence that she was interested in him.

It is no new story that just four years after Shelley made her acquaintance, Fanny killed herself at Swansea. It is no new story that Claire was of opinion that Fanny so destroyed herself, from love of Shelley. Field Place is sure that Claire never really believed any such thing, but was only fibbing in her usual wicked way, when she uttered the story. It is curious to observe, how in the opinion of Field Place, Claire is by turns a liar and a witness of the highest credibility. When she says anything that fits-in with the biographical romance, which is to be substituted for Shelley's true history, she is a virtuous witness; but when she utters anything at discord with the fictitious narrative, she becomes a miracle of mendacity. When she writes, or seems to have written, that she took Shelley and Mary against their will from London to Geneva; took them there without letting them know she was Byron's mistress; and, living with them there, in the capacity of Byron's mistress, managed matters so cleverly that they had no suspicion of her intimacy with Byron—statements so preposterous that they are not to be believed on any conceivable evidence—she is declared a witness of the highest credibility; and Mr. Froude is told-off to declare the preposterous statements must be true, because Claire made them in a withheld document. On the other hand, when this exemplary witness makes the quite credible statement, that Fanny committed suicide for love of Shelley, she is declared a mendacious witness, and Mr. Kegan Paul is instructed to write in *William Godwin; his Friends and Contemporaries* :

‘The theory, which owes its origin to Miss Clairmont, that Fanny was in love with Shelley, and that his flight with her sister prompted self-destruction, is one above all others absolutely groundless. To

Shelley, as to Mary, she was an attached sister; she was never in love with him, either before or after her sister's flight.'

How can Mr. Kegan Paul be justified in making this sweeping statement? He does not offer evidence, and can have no sufficient evidence, in support of the comprehensive assertion. At best his statement can be nothing more than Mrs. Shelley's confident opinion, that her sister was never in love with Shelley. Which of the two, Mary or Claire, was the more likely to know the truth? Mary, who, after her flight with Shelley, saw but little of her sister Fanny; or Claire, who between the elopement in July 1814 and the spring of 1816, saw a great deal of Fanny? Mary, from whom Fanny, if she loved Shelley, would be careful to conceal the cause of her deepening melancholy; or Claire, to whom Fanny may have confided or unconsciously revealed the secret of her wretchedness?

'The theory' (as Mr. Kegan Paul calls it) certainly was not 'absolutely groundless.' (1) By inviting her to correspond with him, Shelley showed a strong interest in Fanny, and paid her a compliment which would be likely to make her take an interest in him, if she had felt none in him before, or to deepen any concern, she had already entertained for him. (2) Their intercourse in the ensuing year was of a nature to stimulate and feed her interest in him. (3) From the date of her sister's flight with Shelley, her natural disposition to melancholy steadily deepened:—a fact accordant with the notion that she loved Shelley.

On the other hand, it must be remembered, that the increase of her melancholy may be otherwise accounted for. The affectionate girl may well have fretted about the shame coming to the whole Godwin household from her sister's elopement with another woman's husband. She may also have made herself greatly miserable about the circumstances of her mother's story, which most likely came to her shortly before her sister's flight. Still, the steady increase of her gloom from the end of July 1814, to the 9th October, 1816, is a ground for regarding Claire's view of the case respectfully.

Unlike Field Place (to whom Claire is a sufficient witness to prove anything they wish people to believe), I cannot, having regard to her unquestionable faculty for fibbing, deem her unsupported testimony adequate for the settlement of any nicely perplexing question. Having regard, however, to Claire's

better means of observation, and several matters giving at least a colour of probability to her view, I would on this matter rather rely on Claire, who sometimes told fibs, than on the Mary Godwin, who sometimes said things that were the reverse of fact. In the absence of sufficient evidence for a confident conclusion, I hold my judgment in suspense with respect to the question, whether Fanny's death resulted from the cause to which Claire attributed it. And I advise the reader to do likewise.

(6.)—TANYRALLT.

Returning to Tanyrallt in the middle of November, 1812, Shelley remained there till some day following closely on 26th February, 1813, and left Carnarvonshire for Dublin on 6th March, 1813. Beginning somewhere about the middle of September 1812, the whole term of his domestication in the county of Carnarvon (including the six weeks' stay in London) was something less than six months. Before the trip to town he had on his hands his wife, Miss Westbrook, and Miss Hitchener. Whilst he and Harriett stayed at the St. James' Coffee-house, Miss Westbrook probably stayed chiefly at her father's house, so as not to increase greatly the charges her brother-in-law was at in the hotel. Miss Hitchener also may be presumed to have visited her friends in Sussex, or elsewhere, whilst Shelley was enjoying the society of the Godwins, so that he was at a smaller expense for her than he would have been, had she stayed the whole six weeks at the West-End hotel. Still the cost to Shelley of the locomotion of so large a party from Tanyrallt to London, and of so long a sojourn in town, must have been greatly in excess of his narrow means.

After the return to Wales, till the end of February 1813, he lived at Tanyrallt Lodge (for which he had engaged to pay a 'large rent') with his wife, sister-in-law, and three female servants. At the same time he bought expensive books of or through Mr. Hookham of Bond Street, incurred a considerable debt for the printing of *Queen Mab*, and put himself under an obligation to pay Miss Hitchener a quarterly stipend. These items of expenditure being taken into account, it may be computed that, from the middle of September 1812, to the beginning of March 1813, he lived, at the least, at the rate of 1000*l.* a-year; no account being taken of the 500*l.* which he had promised to give to the Tremadoc Embankment when he should come of age. This sum being added to the total of his expen-

diture during less than six calendar months, it follows that the young gentleman, with only 400*l.* a-year, was for the same term living at the rate of 2000*l.* a-year,—was in fact living beyond his sufficient income by 400 per cent. It is certain therefore that the letter, in which Godwin warned his young friend against the inconveniences of financial extravagance, was no untimely intrusion of needless advice. Following so closely on the admonitory letter, and the epistle in which he declared his freedom from the weakness imputed to him, this outbreak of prodigality shows how cautious the poet's biographers should be in assuming that his actions corresponded closely with his words.

Whilst living so much beyond his means, Shelley experienced several annoyances in the lovely neighbourhood where he had, for a brief moment, hoped to be happy for ever. Having by the end of the year exhausted the excitement of figuring before the people of Tremadoc as a benefactor, who would never desert them nor grow indifferent to their interests, he discovered in his neighbours the usual qualities of countryfolk, whether they live on the Welsh coast, or in North Devon, or in the Rapes of Sussex. By no means devoid of intellectual narrowness, they were animated with religious bigotry. Believing in Christianity, they mistrusted and disliked those who scoffed at it. Whilst the gentry were proud and grasping, the peasantry were poor and cringing. The farmers were ignorant fools, the squires were (in Shelley's opinion) insufferably dull fellows. 'The society in Wales,' he wrote from Tanyrallt to Hogg, even as early as 3rd December, 1812, 'is very stupid. They are all aristocrats and saints; but that, I tell you, I do not mind in the least; the unpleasant part of the business is, that they hunt people to death who are not so likewise.'

The result, or rather the fruitlessness, of Shelley's excursion to London was, of course, a great disappointment to the Tremadoc populace, and to others of the gentry, besides Mr. Madocks and Mr. Williams. Instead of returning with a handsome list of subscribers, headed by his particular friend the Duke of Norfolk, he was constrained to acknowledge he had not found a single subscriber in London or Sussex. It was clear to the Welshmen that the young gentleman had been talking too fast, and that they had been taken-in by his plausible speech. Angry with themselves for being such simpletons, some of them were disposed to punish him for their own folly. In his annoyance at feeling that his Tremadoc friends had discovered the value of his grand

talk, Shelley wrote bitterly, from Tanyrallt on 7th February, 1813, to Hogg of 'the variety of discomfitures' coming to him from 'the embankment affairs, in which he had thoughtlessly engaged!'

Indications are not wanting that for a brief while after coming to Tremadoc, Shelley was less loquacious than he had been for some years about those of his views on politics and religion, that could not fail to be as offensive to the people of Carnarvonshire as they had proved to persons of other counties. But it was not in his nature to be so discreet for many weeks together. Hence it came to pass that before leaving Wales he was superlatively distasteful to several of his Tanyrallt neighbours on account of his infidelity and ultra-radicalism. By some means or other one of his Irish pamphlets fell into the hands of a certain Mr. Leeson, who, discovering treason in the essay, sent it up to the Government, and then went about the neighbourhood, saying the author of the pamphlet was a pestilent Republican, who ought to be driven out of the country. Shelley and Harriett tried to persuade themselves that Mr. Leeson's animosity against them was due to their firmness in refusing to receive him within their doors, because they knew him to be 'malignant and cruel to the greatest degree,'—a view of the case that, on coming to Mr. Leeson's ears, cannot have rendered him less desirous of ridding the neighbourhood of those pestilent Shelleys.

In one of the earlier weeks (probably towards the end of the second week) of November, 1812, whilst the Shelleys were still at the St. James's Coffee-house, Hogg appears to have urged his friend for pecuniary ends to make overtures for a reconciliation with his father, and to appeal to the Duke of Norfolk for his good offices in rendering the overtures successful. It being obvious to Hogg that the Shelleys were living greatly beyond their means, he may well have pressed this scheme upon them as the only plan of preserving them from a scandalous exposure of their financial troubles. The advice thus given in the first instance by word of mouth, was renewed by words of the pen, to which Shelley (more truth-loving, be it remembered, than most men) replied from Tanyrallt, on 3rd December, 1812, in a letter, containing these remarkable words:—'*I will, this instant, sit down and do penance for my involuntary crime by writing a long wheedling letter to his Grace, and you shall*

be informed of the success of the experiment.' At the same time, whilst avowing his despair of influencing his father by any but selfish considerations, Shelley declared his intention of approaching old Killjoy with an air of good humour and a conciliatory countenance, and essaying to conquer his austerity with civil speeches. 'When I see him,' he remarks, 'though I shall say the civilest things imaginable, yet I shall not look as if I liked him, because I do not like him.'

To wheedle, is to entice, coax, cajole with flattering and false words for the attainment of an end. To write a wheedling letter is to write false and flattering words for the attainment of an end. Such a letter Shelley coolly declares his intention of writing to his father's patron, in order to get money by doing so. At the same time he coolly declares his intention to say 'the civilest imaginable things' to his father (whilst hating him cordially), in order to get money out of his pocket.

An incident of English public affairs to stir Shelley greatly during his residence at Tanyrallt was the punishment of the Hunts for libelling the Prince Regent in the *Examiner* newspaper, the sentence on each of the brothers being a fine of 500*l.* with imprisonment for two years. Though the facts of the case have been strangely misrepresented (the virulent libel on the Prince Regent in his private character having been minimized into a saucy reference to his age and corpulence), there is no need to set them forth precisely in this chapter. Whether the libel was well deserved (as Mr. Rossetti avers, whilst admitting with his usual honesty the extreme virulence of the attack) is a question beside the main question, viz., whether the ministers responsible for the efficient government of the country would have been justified in allowing clever and resolute journalists to use such violent and scurrilous language, in order to inflame the public against the individual who was the *ipso facto* sovereign. On this question no opinion is here offered. It is enough to record that the poet (by this time slightly acquainted with Leigh Hunt) felt that the Hunts had been punished with excessive severity, and should be relieved of the pecuniary part of their punishment. Acting on this sentiment Shelley wrote, on some day of February, 1813, from Tanyrallt, to Mr. Hookham of Old Bond Street,—'I am rather poor at present, but I have 20*l.* which is not immediately wanted. Pray begin a subscription for the Hunts; put my

name down for that sum, and, when I hear that you have complied with my request, I will send it to you.
 P S.— On second thoughts I enclose the 20l.'

Applauding Shelley for subscribing 500l. for the Tremadoc embankment, Lady Shelley applauds him for coming forward with 20l. 'to vindicate and support an oppressed fellow-struggler for liberty and justice.' A matter, to be mentioned in connexion with the gift to the Hunts, is that Shelley was in debt to divers of the petty tradesmen of his neighbourhood, who, in the opinion of some readers, may have had a stronger claim to the money so gallantly sent off to the journalists in trouble; his debts to small tradesmen being the more worthy of notice, because they did not give him their goods on the understanding that they should wait for payment till he came of age.

Shelley's letters from Tanyrallt show that he was reading history and philosophy in the last month of 1812 and the opening months of 1813. The books sent him in this period by his London bookseller comprise works by Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Plutarch, Spinoza, and Kant, it being worthy of notice that, whilst ordering Greek classics, he requires editions having 'Latin or English translations printed opposite.'

At the same time he is at work on *Queen Mab*. In a former chapter reference was made to metrical compositions, that were in course of time expanded and worked into *Queen Mab*. But though there are grounds for a confident opinion, that it comprised a considerable quantity of his earlier verse, the first of Shelley's compositions to be mentioned amongst the fruits of his poetical genius, was the production of 1812 and the opening months of 1813. *Queen Mab* was unquestionably the work of which he wrote on 18th August, 1812, from Lynton to Mr. Thomas Hookham: 'I conceive I have matter for six more cantos. . . . Indeed, a poem is safe; the iron-souled Attorney-General would scarcely dare to attack.' Writing of the same poem from Tanyrallt to Hogg on 7th February, 1813, he says, '*Mab* has gone on but slowly, although she is nearly finished.' On a later day of the same month he wrote to Mr. Hookham, '*Queen Mab* is finished and transcribed.' The use made of old material does not touch the fact that the poem was mainly written in his twenty-first year, instead of his nineteenth year. When he wrote (June, 1821) in the *Examiner* the words, 'a

poem, entitled *Queen Mab*, was written by me at the age of eighteen—I dare say in a sufficiently intemperate spirit,' he was guilty of an error to be grouped with his misstatements to Godwin, respecting the time when he wrote *Zastrozzi* and *St. Irvyne*. After announcing the completion of the poem to Hookham, the poet adds, 'I am now preparing the notes, which shall be long and philosophical.' It is worthy of remark that he was working upon the notes when he was at a distance from Godwin, who, on no evidence whatever, has been declared personally accountable for the note touching love and marriage,—a note comprising sentiments which Godwin had promulgated when Shelley was playing with his corals, and abandoned before the close of the last century.

The most agreeable aspect of Shelley's life at Tanyrallt affords a view of his intercourse with his wife. As she gave birth to Shelley's eldest child, Ianthe Eliza, in London, on 28th June, 1813, Harriett, at the turn of the year 1812-13, had for some time been in a state of health, to animate Shelley with a renewal of tenderness for her, and to quicken their mutual affection. Stirred with the hope of becoming a father in the ensuing summer, the poet who had longed at Dublin and Nantgwillt for the delights of conversation with his philosophical school-mistress, now found in his wife the sufficient mate she had not been to him either in Ireland or at Keswick. Possibly his discovery of a Brown Demon in the whilom angelical Miss Hitchener was, in some degree, accountable for his contentment with the wife who promised soon to give him an heir. Anyhow there can be no question that the moderate satisfaction with which he may be said to have regarded his bride for several months after the subsidence of the first excitements of the honeymoon, was now replaced by a state of feeling that caused him to write of her with mingled pride and gladness. The letter in which, whilst defending her from the imputation of being 'a fine lady,' he spoke admiringly of 'the uncalculating connexion of her thoughts and speech,' was dated to Fanny Imlay on 10th December, 1812. In a letter of later date, referring to his unconcern whether he came to terms with his father, he associates Harriett's happiness with his own contentment;—'Harriett is very happy as we are, and I am very happy.' Though he writes complainingly in a yet later letter (7th February, 1813) of vexation coming to him from 'the embankment

affair,' he speaks of his home as a place where he forgets the annoyance, and knows nought but joy in Harriett's society;—'for when I come home to Harriett I am the happiest of the happy.' Whilst reading Greek classics with the help of 'cribs,' he is teaching Harriett Latin so as to give her a general notion of Horace's *Odes* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. 'Harriett,' he writes to Hogg on the 7th February, 1813, 'has a bold scheme of writing you a Latin letter. If you have an Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, she will thank you to bring it.'

Whilst Hogg (who had promised to stay with his friends at Tanyrallt in the next month) is thus invited to take part and interest in her higher education, Harriett is corresponding with the man who (according to the Shelleyan idolaters) was guilty of trying to seduce her some sixteen months since. Even to these idolaters it must appear that Shelley's confidence in his wife's goodness was perfect, when he encouraged her to live in affectionate intimacy with the man whom he still (according to the idolaters) thought guilty of having so recently essayed to seduce her. By them also it must be admitted that this confidence in her goodness was at Tanyrallt associated in Shelley's breast with lively affection for her. The happy state of feeling was in its brightest season and tenderest hour when Shelley produced the famous dedicatory lines of *Queen Mab*.

' TO HARRIET * * * * *

' Whose is the love that, gleaming through the world,
Wards off the poisonous arrow of its scorn?
Whose is the warm and partial praise,
Virtue's most sweet reward?

Beneath whose looks did my reviving soul
Riper in truth and virtuous daring grow?
Whose eyes have I gazed fondly on,
And loved mankind the more?

Harriet! on thine:—thou wert my purer mind;
Thou wert the inspiration of my song;
Thine are these early wilding flowers,
Though garlanded by me.

Then press into thy breast this pledge of love;
And know, though time may change and years may roll,
Each floweret gathered in my heart
It consecrates to thine.'

In representing that these verses were written in 1810, and addressed in the first instance to Harriett Grove, Medwin committed the most ludicrous blunder of his unreliable book ;—the mistake, moreover, that, of all his multitudinous blunders about Shelley, is most easily shown to be a mistake. (1) The critical reader has only to compare these verses with the puerile sets of rhymes in *St. Irvyne* to be satisfied that in 1810 Shelley could not have written them, to save his own life or compass his father's death. (2) The first two stanzas are so completely out of harmony with the certain facts of Shelley's pursuit of his cousin's affection, as to prove conclusively that she was not in his mind when he wrote the verses. Instead of 'gleaming through the world,' Harriett Grove's love of her cousin was less than apparent even to his own sister. Instead of warding off the poisonous arrow of the world's scorn, the world had no sooner displayed a disposition to speak scornfully of him, than Harriett Grove told him to go about his business. Instead of speaking of him with 'warm and partial praise,' Harriett Grove never discovered anything to commend in him. Shelley and Harriett Grove had parted company for ever, months before he had endured the disgrace, from whose withering effects he describes himself as recovering under the sympathetic looks of the Harriett to whom the poem is addressed. (3) On the other hand, the descriptive lines are appropriate to the circumstances under which he won Harriett's love, and she gave him her heart, whilst social disgrace was new to him. (4) In June, 1821, though forgetful of the exact year of his life in which *Queen Mab* was written, Shelley remembered so clearly having dedicated the poem to his first wife that he wrote from Italy to Mr. Ollier in that month :—

'I ought to say, however, that I am obliged to this piratical fellow in one respect: that he has omitted, with a delicacy for which I thank him heartily, a foolish dedication to my late wife, the publication of which would have annoyed me, and indeed is the only part of the business that could seriously have annoyed me, although it is my duty to protest against the whole.'

These facts notwithstanding, some of the Shelleyan enthusiasts (in their reluctance to believe that Shelley ever cared much for Harriett Westbrook) insist that Medwin may have been right in this business, because the verses appeared in the

original edition of *Queen Mab* under this heading, 'To Harriet * * * *,' the number of the asterisks being the same as the number of the letters in the surname 'Grove,' whereas there are *nine* letters in 'Westbrook,' and *seven* in 'Shelley.' 'The number of asterisks,' says Mr. Buxton Forman, 'it will be observed, corresponds with the name of Grove; and they might have been left simply by oversight when the dedication went to press as for Harriet Shelley.'

For the argument to have the faintest force, it would be needful to show that, when indicating a name by asterisks, Shelley was careful to use the same number of asterisks as the name had letters. Was this Shelley's practice? Though the *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* was made up chiefly of a journal kept by Mary Godwin, it comprises letters and other original writing by Shelley, who saw the little book through the press, and made himself responsible for its typographical details. In the 'journal' 'Shelley' (a name of seven letters) is indicated by 'S * * *,' the initial letter and *three* asterisks; 'Claire,' a name of six letters, being also indicated by 'C * * *,' the initial letter and three asterisks. In the original writing by Shelley, the names 'Mary' and 'Claire' are indicated thus: 'We dined (M * * *, C * * *, and I) on the grass:' the initial of the name of four letters and the initial of the name of six letters being alike followed by *three* asterisks.

Though he was happy in Harriett's society, there is reason for thinking Shelley was much out of health towards the end of his stay at Tanyrallt. In the middle of February, 1813, he had been living for three months on vegetables. Living at this period of his story 'on what he could get,' *i.e.* chops and steaks, when he was on journeys and feeding at inns, Shelley persisted in the diet of vegetarians when he was at home. 'I continue vegetable,' he wrote to Hogg on 27th December, 1812; 'Harriet means to be slightly animal until the arrival of spring.' Of course, he persuaded himself that this diet favoured his health; but we know from Peacock, who may be termed the physiological observer of his friend's peculiarities, that, instead of being good for him, it was hurtful to the delicate and nervous Shelley in various ways.

'When,' says Peacock, 'he was fixed in a place, he adhered to this diet consistently and conscientiously, but it certainly did not agree with him: it made him weak and nervous, and exaggerated the sensitiveness

of his imagination. Then arose those thick-coming fancies which almost invariably preceded his change of place.'

The maker of these discreet observations gives a remarkable example of the quickness, with which Shelley rose from a condition of physical weakness to a high state of bodily vigour and enjoyment under the stimulus of animal food. During the excursion (August, 1815) on the Thames, from Old Windsor to Lechlade in Gloucestershire, Shelley, on 'the way up,' was so weak and otherwise out of order, as to feel he ought to return. Having taken medical advice at Oxford with no apparent advantage, he was entreated by Peacock to eat three well-peppered mutton-chops. Acting on the wise counsel, Shelley forthwith ate with keen relish three well-peppered mutton-chops, and went on his way rejoicing. 'He lived in my way,' says Peacock, 'for the rest of our expedition, rowed vigorously, was cheerful, merry, overflowing with animal spirits, and had certainly one week of thorough enjoyment of life.' Living thus carnivorously at the comfortable inn at Lechlade, where the party rested for two nights, he there wrote the *Lines in Lechlade Churchyard*.

How Byron and Shelley came to resemble one another in eccentricity of diet is uncertain. The older poet had recourse to his regimen of Epsom salts and vegetarian starvation in the first instance for the reduction of his fatness; but Shelley's natural habit of body forbids the suspicion that he took to abstinence for the same purpose. Nor can the influence of the vegetarians, with whom he lived intimately in London and at Bracknell, be held accountable for his first trial of a diet, which he adopted in Dublin, before making their acquaintance. Perhaps he adopted the Byronic diet just as he adopted the Byronic shirt-collar, in imitation of the poet whom he admired so greatly. It is conceivable that, had he not heard of Byron's dinners of hard biscuits or mashed vegetables, washed down with soda-water, he would have continued to eat and drink, as he had done from boyhood to the middle of his twentieth year. Anyhow, it is certain that Shelley's vegetarianism, attended with intermissions of the regimen when he was on his journeys and 'ate what he could get,' differed little from Byron's general rule of abstinence from the luxuries of the table, broken with occasional dinners and suppers, at which he devoured whatever came in his way. For thus feeding themselves, the two poets

have fared differently at the hands of history. Whilst Byron has been generally ridiculed for living low in order to preserve his beauty; Shelley has been no less generally applauded for his indifference to the pleasures of the table.

The diet, which affected them so differently in reputation, had the same results on their nerves and health. Under the regimen of starvation (accompanied in the case of Byron, by far the stronger man, with a more free use of purgative medicine) they became weak and nervous sufferers from a peculiar kind of spasmodic dyspepsia, that in its sharper assaults disposed them to seek relief from pain in laudanum, and may perhaps have been the first and chief cause of their perilous familiarity with opium. In drinking laudanum to deaden the pangs of spasmodic dyspepsia, consequent on long persistence in a lowering, and otherwise hurtful diet, Shelley (be it observed) took opium when he had been slowly reduced to a condition, that rendered the drug more powerful to derange his nerves for several days, than it would have been had he been previously sustained by sufficient food. This is a matter for readers to bear in mind whilst considering circumstances soon to be narrated.

It follows that, after living for three months on the diet usual with him in this period of his career, Shelley may be regarded as in a state of health that, besides making him restless and disposing him to have recourse to opium, would be fruitful of 'those thick-coming fancies which almost invariably preceded his change of place.'

Several circumstances, apart from his health, may also be assumed to have disposed him just then to think of getting away from Tanyrallt. He had just finished *Queen Mab*; and the act of completing an intellectual enterprise, that has engaged a scholar's faculties for several months, is often followed by a yearning for diversion in new scenes. At war with some of his neighbours, living on uneasy terms with others, and sick of the embankment folly, that had for some time been fruitful of annoyances, he may well have wished to fly off from a place that had lost the charms of novelty. Pecuniary considerations may also have disposed him to fly from Tremadoc. If he remained at Tanyrallt for another six months, Mr. Madocks would be pressing him for payment of a certain deferred rent; Mr. Williams would be pressing him for the settlement of certain

other small affairs of business; and the projectors of the new embankment would be asking when he would find it convenient to pay the promised 500*l*. Another affair, that may be presumed to have troubled Shelley in the middle of February, 1813, was the near approach of the day when Daniel Hill would appear at Tanyrallt with a reasonable expectation of being again taken into the service of the master, who had caused him to be imprisoned in North Devon. It is not suggested that Shelley was meditating flight from North Wales in order to get out of Daniel Hill's way. By showing that Shelley had given Daniel Hill timely information where to find him, the servant's arrival at Tanyrallt on the 26th of February, 1813, would of itself be sufficient to show the injustice of any such suggestion. But though he was ready to befriend the Irishman, who had suffered so much in his service, Shelley may well have wished to leave his corner of Carnarvonshire, as soon as Daniel should appear in Mr. Leeson's neighbourhood. The inquisitive, prying, malevolent, relentless Mr. Leeson would, of course, think it his duty to learn whence Daniel had come, and what he had been doing since his master's arrival at Tremadoc. Shelley had reason to apprehend that Mr. Leeson (already in correspondence with the Solicitor of the Treasury about the poet) would receive official information of Daniel's recent trouble, and his master's not remote activity in North Devon. In which case there would be talk in Tremadoc, that would make Tanyrallt an especially disagreeable place of abode for Daniel Hill's master.

Such was the position of affairs in North Wales, when, during the night of 26th February, 1813 (and within a few hours of the Barnstaple gaol-bird's appearance at the villa, fit for an Italian prince), Tanyrallt became the scene of certain curious incidents. The weather was cold and stormy, the wind in its violence made an uproar loud as thunder about the gables and chimneys of Tanyrallt Lodge, and the rain fell in torrents, when Shelley loaded a pair of pistols, under strong impression that he should have occasion to use them during the night. Having loaded the weapons, the poet went to bed between the hours of ten and eleven p.m., and remained in bed for about half-an-hour, when, on hearing a noise in one of the parlours, he rose from Harriett's side, and, taking his pistols, went downstairs. A minute or two later, the sound of a pistol-shot was heard in the house. This pistol-shot was followed at a brief interval by

a second explosion of the same kind. Audible to Harriett in her bedroom, to Miss Westbrook in her bedroom, and to the domestic servants (three maids and Daniel Hill), who, though in the act of going to rest, had not yet got into their beds, the firing caused the ladies and servitors to assemble hurriedly in the chief parlour of the house, where Shelley gave them this stirring account of what had taken place.

On getting to the bottom of the stairs he went to the billiard-room, where the noise of steps was audible. Following these steps he went through the billiard-room into the little room, called 'the office,' where he saw a man in the act of quitting the room through the glass-door, opening into the shrubbery. Shelley was so fortunate as to avoid the shot of the pistol, which the retreating miscreant fired at him. Shelley did his best to return the shot, but by ill-luck his pistol only flashed in the pan. The next incident of the affair was that the assassin knocked Shelley down;—an incident that afforded the assassin an opportunity of flying into the outer darkness. Instead of making off, the assassin grappled with Shelley and struggled with him on the floor. During this struggle, the narrator drew his second pistol and fired a shot, that caused the man to shriek, as he rose from the floor and went away into the shrubbery. The assassin had fled, but not without being wounded in the shoulder, if Shelley estimated rightly the effect of his second shot. A very remarkable incident of the affair was, that, after seeming to be wounded in the shoulder, and just before turning to fly, the assassin delivered himself of this rather too melodramatic utterance:—'By God, I will be revenged! I will murder your wife; I will ravish your sister! By God, I will be revenged!'

One can imagine how poor little Harriett shuddered and cried, 'Oh, the wretch!' It is more difficult to realize Miss Westbrook's sensations. Of course, the party of seven did not separate immediately after hearing Shelley's horrible tale. On the contrary, they remained in the parlour for about two hours, before Shelley (thinking it highly improbable that the wounded assassin would return before the morning, to execute his atrocious menaces) advised the two ladies to retire to rest. In accordance with this advice, the women went off to bed, leaving Shelley and Daniel Hill to sit up, and keep guard, in case the villain should make a second attack.

In declaring it improbable that the assassin, with a bullet in his shoulder, would return before daybreak to murder Harriett and ravish her sister, the author of *Zastrozzi* showed how imperfectly he realized the possibilities of the position. After returning to her bed at about one a.m., Harriett had occupied it just upon three hours, when at about 4 a.m., she heard a third pistol explosion, which caused her immediately to rise from her couch, and run downstairs to her husband, who received her with a thrilling statement of his narrow escape from death by the pistol that had just gone off. His story was this:—He had sent Daniel Hill out of the room to see what o'clock it was, when, in the servant's absence, he heard a noise at the parlour window, and, on approaching the window, saw a man thrust his arm *through the glass* and fire a pistol at him. Hence the broken window and the explosion that had brought Harriett from her bedroom. Thank Heaven! instead of bedding itself in his body, the pistol's ball had passed through his flannel night-shirt, without even grazing his skin. Had he not been standing sideways towards the window, Shelley said he must have been killed. In support of these statements, he pointed to the broken window and the holes made in his flannel night-dress by the bullet. Further, he assured Harriett that, after so narrowly escaping death, he aimed and pulled the trigger of his pistol, but it would not go off:—this being the second time for him to draw trigger, with no result save a flash in the pan. His pistol having failed him again, Shelley aimed a blow at his assailant with an old sword, which the miscreant had almost succeeded in wresting from him, when Daniel Hill rushed into the room. On Daniel Hill's appearance, the twice-baffled assassin let go his hold of the old sword, and again disappeared in the darkness. All this took place during the night of Friday, 26th February, 1813. On Saturday, the 27th instant, Shelley went off with his marvellous story (differing in important particulars from the narrative of the previous pages) to the Solicitor-General of the county, who lived at a distance of some twelve miles from the scene of the outrage.

My account of what took place, and of what was alleged by Shelley to have taken place in Tanyrallt Lodge on the night of 26th February, 1813, is made from the statements of what may be called the circular letter which Mrs. Shelley sent at her husband's request, to divers of his friends, whom they wished

to inform precisely of a matter, likely to be greatly misrepresented. As this letter was intended to be the enduring and authoritative record of the strange and perplexing business, I have used it for my narrative. It should, however, be observed, that the account of the matter so given by the Shelleys, some ten or fourteen days after the affair, differs materially from what Shelley himself seems to have told the Solicitor-General and Mr. Madocks of the affair on the 27th of February. Medwin's report of what Mr. Madocks told him of Shelley's own statement, is to this effect:—That, whilst sitting in the study on the eventful night, Shelley 'heard a noise at the window, saw one of the shutters gradually unclosed, and a hand advanced into the room armed with a pistol;' that the weapon having missed fire, Shelley ran to seize the ruffian who had pulled the trigger; that, on passing through the door into the garden, to get at the villain, Shelley found himself face to face with his assailant; that the villain made a second attempt to shoot Shelley with a pistol, which, like the other pistol, missed fire; that, after this second essay at shooting, the poet and his assailant wrestled with one another desperately in the garden, till the latter escaped from the lawn to the shrubbery, and disappeared. The inaccurate Medwin's report of what Mr. Madocks told him at Florence long after 1813, is, of course, to be read with suspicion and distrust. On one or two points of his account of the affair, Medwin is guilty of mistakes of fact, for which he alone is to be held accountable. But it was not in Shelley's power to tell the exciting story twice in the same fortnight, or on two following days, without discrepancies. That his story to Mr. Madocks on 27th February, 1813, gave particulars of 'long and painful wrestling on the lawn' is more than probable; the lawn having been trodden and rolled upon by some person or persons, so as to give it the appearance of having been the scene of violent wrestling.

The story, of course, flew like wildfire. In Tremadoc it was received with general incredulity and derision, as a tale made up by young Mr. Shelley, in order to have a pretext for leaving the neighbourhood in a trice without paying his bills; but Shelley and Harriett begged their friends to understand that the story would not have been received in this insulting way, had it not been for the malevolent action of Mr. Leeson,

who hastened to assure the Tremadoc shopkeepers they were being trifled with by an impostor.

The affair having been reported by Shelley to the Solicitor-General, it became the subject of careful investigation. Not only was the evidence of the alleged attack sifted, but it was sifted by persons peculiarly qualified to examine it. The Solicitor-General of the county (an expert in evidence touching assaults and other outrages against the law), keen-witted Mr. Madocks (a man of affairs, familiar with the people of the neighbourhood), Mr. Williams (Mr. Madocks's agent, a shrewd Welshman), Mr. Williams's brother (a man of similar shrewdness) were amongst the persons to look into the matter. All these persons were friendly to Shelley, though they had for some time thought him given to talk too fast. All four were on familiar terms with him. The Solicitor-General received the Shelleys into his own house, and entertained them there from 27th February to the day in the first week of March, on which they left North Wales for Ireland. Consequently the investigation was directed, made, carried out by the gentleman, who was at the moment of the investigation Shelley's host. Mr. Madocks and the Messrs. Williams had a distinct interest in keeping on friendly terms with Shelley, and doing all that was just for the maintenance of his credit. Consequently the investigation was in the hands of Shelley's especial friends. Yet the unanimous verdict of local opinion was that no attack had been made, and that Shelley's allegations respecting the attacks said to have been made on him during the night of the 26th of February were baseless and untruthful,—their untruthfulness being referable either to delusion or falsehood on his part. No single voice (except the voices of Harriett, Miss Westbrook, Shelley, doubtless Daniel Hill, and possibly the other servants of the house,) was raised in Carnarvonshire against the result of an investigation, which, be it observed, was (from the wetness of the ground about the lodge, at the time of the alleged assaults) made under peculiarly favourable conditions. With the single exception of Mr. Hookham (who seems, at least for a moment, to have believed the wild story), Shelley's London friends were no less unanimous in thinking the verdict of the inquisitors a just one. Hogg says of the alleged attack, 'Persons acquainted with the localities and with

the circumstances, and who had carefully investigated the matter, were unanimous in the opinion, that no such attempt was ever made. *I never met with any person who believed in it.* In the summer of 1813 (within a few months of the alleged attack), Peacock, who had made Shelley's acquaintance in the previous autumn, went from London to Wales, and prosecuted inquiries on the spot respecting this Tanyrallt business; the result being that he had no doubt the attacks were never made, and that Shelley's perplexing part in the affair was referable to 'semi-delusion,'—the condition of mind in which Shelley, according to Peacock, was partly deluded and partly untruthful.

How could the investigators come to any other conclusion on the main question than that the attacks had not been made?

(1) It did not escape them that Shelley, living in a peaceful nook of Carnarvon, loaded his pistols before going to bed under circumstances, indicating in some degree a mental predisposition to find an occasion for using the weapons during the night.

(2) It did not escape them, that of the seven persons in the house, no one, with the exception of Shelley, professed to have seen the assassin, either on the occasion of attack No. 1 in the little office, or on the occasion of attack No. 2, at the parlour window.

(3) It did not escape them, that Shelley admitted no third person was present on the occasion of either his first or his second conflict with the assassin.

(4) It did not escape them, that no one of the seven persons, with the exception of Shelley, could speak to having heard a sound, that might not be referred either to the storm, or Shelley's action, or to the action of some person lawfully in the house.

(5) It did not escape them, that the two pistol explosions in the little office might have been caused by Shelley's two pistols, there being no evidence (apart from his bare assertion) that one of his pistols had only flashed in the pan during affair No. 1.

(6) It did not escape them, that, as he was passing through the window into the shrubbery at the very moment of Shelley's appearance in the little office, the assassin acted very strangely in suddenly changing his mind and attacking Shelley, when he had it in his power to accomplish his purpose of passing into the outer darkness.

(7) It did not escape them, that, after knocking Shelley clean down, the assassin surrendered the advantage coming to him from the *coup*, so far as to throw himself on the floor, and struggle with his adversary, instead of kicking him on the head.

(8) It did not escape them, that, after shrieking from Shelley's pistol-shot and recovering his feet, the assassin acted in a very unbusiness-like way, in saying, 'By God, I will be revenged! I will murder your wife; I will ravish your sister! By God, I will be revenged!'

(9) Questions were, of course, put to Shelley respecting the light, which enabled him to see his assailant in the act of quitting the room 'through a glass-door which opened into the shrubbery.' It being a starless, pitch-dark night (for the rain descended in torrents), Shelley, if he saw an assailant, must have discerned him by artificial light. It is not to be imagined that the billiard-room and little office were illuminated with many candles, so as to give the combatants a good view of one another. Shelley would scarcely have gone in search of nocturnal enemies with a candle in his hand. If he took a candle into the little office, it must surely have been extinguished soon after he entered the small chamber. The proximity of the shrubbery outside the glass door, would not have lessened the darkness of the room or of the space on which the glass-door opened. What questions were put to Shelley, and what he said, about the light, which rendered the assassin visible, does not appear.

(10) To the investigators it must have appeared strange that the assassin, either with or without a bullet in his shoulder, returned in three hours to make a second attempt on Shelley's life.

(11) To the same inquisitors it must have seemed remarkable that the assassin preluded this second essay at murder, by thrusting his arm through the glass, and thereby smashing the window. It is unusual for nocturnal assailants to be so noisy in their preliminary movements.

(12) Through the wetness of the ground about the house, the assassin could not have approached the parlour window for the accomplishment of his deadly purpose, or after the second futile attempt at murder, without leaving clear footprints on the soaking-wet lawn. There were marks of footsteps on the

grass, to which the investigators paid particular attention. On visiting Tremadoc and Tanyralit in the summer of 1813, when all the circumstances of the alleged assaults were fresh in the memory of the people in those parts, Peacock received information, that years afterwards caused him to write these words:— 'Persons who had examined the premises on the following morning had found that the grass of the lawn appeared to have been much trampled and rolled on, but there were no footmarks on the wet ground, except between the beaten spot and the window.' Why was the lawn thus trampled and rolled upon at some distance from the parlour window? To give the ground an appearance that would accord with some account given by Shelley of his final struggle with the assassin, other than the account given of the contention in Harriett's well-known letter on this subject? Who had trampled and rolled about on the wet grass, so as to give it the appearance of having been the scene of a struggle? Shelley? or Daniel Hill? or both of them? As there were no footmarks on the wet ground, except between the beaten spot and the window, it was, of course, obvious to the investigators, that the persons, accountable for the hard usage of the turf in one particular spot of the lawn, had entered the house and remained there, after so trampling and disordering the surface of the sward; and also, that no persons had been about the garden during the night, with the exception of persons of the house. Of course, the investigators narrowly scrutinized the footprints, which certainly occupied much of their intention. Doubtless the Solicitor-General satisfied himself whether any of the footprints corresponded with the soles of Shelley's shoes, the soles of Daniel Hill's boots, the soles of boots and shoes worn by the women of the house. Of the particulars of the Solicitor-General's conclusions respecting these damnatory marks on the wet grass there is no record. There is no reason to regret the absence of such particulars from the record. It is enough to know that the investigators examined the footprints, and came to the conclusion that they were made by no foreigner to the household.

(13) But it still remains to state the most remarkable matter of evidence that came under the notice of the investigators. On coming to Shelley in the parlour immediately after the second of the alleged attacks, Mrs Shelley perceived that the window-curtain and her husband's flannel night-shirt had been pene-

trated by a bullet. Shelley told her that this injury had been done to the curtain and his night-dress by the ball of the pistol that had been fired at him by the assassin,—firing *from* the window into the room. The mark of this ball was found by the inquisitors in the wainscot near the window; the position and character of the mark showing that the pistol, instead of being fired *from*, had been fired *towards* the window;—that, instead of being fired by the assassin outside the window, the pistol had been fired by Shelley *from* the interior of the room.

This piece of dynamical evidence satisfied the inquisitors that Shelley's baffled assassin was an imaginary caitiff. Till it can be shown that a ball, issuing from a pistol pointed due south, must necessarily take a course due north, Shelley (all his superb poetry notwithstanding) must be held to have said what was directly the reverse of the fact, when he told his wife that the bullet, which, after passing through his flannel shirt and the window-curtain, penetrated the wainscot near the parlour window, was shot from the window in the direction of the opposite wall. The discovery of that bullet-mark gave the *coup-de-grace* to whatever remained of the favourable regard in which Shelley had been held by the people of Tremadoc.

It is probable that Peacock first hit upon his curious term 'semi-delusions,' after reviewing all the facts that came to his knowledge about this singular affair in the summer of 1813. How much of Shelley's chief part in the strange affair should be attributed to hallucination? How much to deceptive intention? I would fain attribute the whole of it to delusion. But I cannot do so. In previous pages prominence has been given to every consideration, that may be produced honestly, in order to dispose the reader to think delusion chiefly accountable for the poet's final escapade at Tanyrallt. There is no positive evidence that he was seriously out of health, or under the dominion of morbid fancy, or taking laudanum with extraordinary freedom at this particular time; but for his reputation's sake I have been careful to adduce every matter favourable to the opinion that his action in what is usually called 'the Tanyrallt mystery,' should be referred to nervous derangement rather than to moral obliquity. In a previous chapter especial notice was taken of his imaginary escape at Keswick from the grasp of an imaginary robber—a delusion which seems to have been in no degree complicated with deceitful designs—in order that the incident

should be remembered to his advantage, when the readers of this work should be invited to decide for themselves how far he was deluded, and how far false, in this Tanyrallt business.

Notwithstanding the numerous and obvious reasons for thinking he acted dishonestly throughout the whole affair, it is conceivable that he was under the influence of delusion in the earlier passages of the drama. In loading the pistols before he went to bed, and declaring a fear that he would have occasion to use them before the morning, he only did and said what has been done in nervous apprehension by countless men, whose honesty has never been called in question. In leaving his bed so soon after his retirement to the couch, and going downstairs with his weapons to look for a housebreaker, he displayed only the alarm that was likely to ensue from the anticipation of disturbance. The nervous man, who passes at night through dark passages in search of a burglar, is apt to imagine he sees the intruder for whom he is looking. All the imaginary incidents of the imaginary encounter in the little room are reconcilable with the theory that Shelley acted sincerely in the whole affair. It was natural for the author of *Zastrozzi* to imagine himself addressed by the imaginary assassin in such language, as might have proceeded from any one of the villains of that marvellous romance. In spite of the suspicious circumstance that he sent Daniel Hill out of the room before seeing the assassin again at the window of the parlour, I can just conceive it possible that Shelley really believed he saw the villain at the window.

But at this point my ability to imagine, that he may have acted and spoken from misconception, comes to an end. His pistol may have exploded accidentally, though it is more reasonable to think he fired it with design;—intending that the ball should pass through his night-dress, and holding the flannel well out from his body with the left hand, so that the bullet in passing through the night-dress should not graze the skin of his body. But it is inconceivable that he attributed the explosion of his own pistol to the imaginary weapon of an imaginary assassin. As the ball of Shelley's weapon struck and pierced the wainscot of the window, it cannot be supposed to have smashed the window. To Shelley's muscles, acting upon glass and frame in Daniel Hill's absence, it must be attributed that the window was injured in a manner, accordant with what he a few minutes later told Mrs. Shelley of his conflict with the assassin. The old

sword, which the imaginary assassin was alleged to have tried to wrest from him, seems to have been used by Shelley as an instrument for smashing the window.

Even by those, who can believe the poet imagined himself struggling desperately with an assailant *on the other side of the window frame* whilst he was thus smashing the window, it will be conceded that the indications of struggling, put subsequently on the wet grass of the lawn at a considerable distance from the house, must have been put on the turf for evidential ends, and with a deceptive purpose. The turf cannot have been trampled upon, stamped down and rolled upon, in order to keep a nocturnal assailant out of the house. The grass must have been so treated in order to give it a show of having been the scene of a violent struggle between persons, alternately wrestling with and rolling over one another:—a show that should on the morrow accord with Shelley's original account to the Solicitor-General, which seems to have differed materially from his account of the struggle to Harriett. Shelley cannot be imagined to have gone out of his house at an early hour of a cold February morning, immediately after a night of alarm and wakefulness, and to have danced and rolled upon the grass of his wet lawn for mere amusement. Nor are servants wont to act in so insane a fashion for the mere fun of the thing. For what end, but the one already stated, can the grass have been thus danced, trodden, and rolled upon? Whether the signs of a struggle were put upon the grass by Shelley himself, or by some other person or persons of his household, the work of disordering the turf's surface must be regarded as *his* work.

But though the evidence is so conclusive that Shelley was *not* attacked by an assassin at Tanyrallt on the night of 26th February, 1813, and that he with his own pistol shot through the flannel night-dress the bullet, which he declared to have been shot through it by another person, his wildest idolaters insist that he was so attacked and shot at. Lady Shelley says, 'Yet this continual beneficence could not save Shelley from an attempt on his life of a most atrocious and extraordinary kind.' Mr. Denis Florence MacCarthy wishes us to believe that the baffled assassin was no other person than Miss Hitchener's father.

Assuming that the first quarterly allowance of Miss Hitchener's stipend was not paid; assuming that ineffectual

demands had been made to Shelley for payment of the money; assuming that Miss Hitchener's account of Shelley's treatment of her had caused much angry talk against him in her father's tap-room; assuming that this angry talk incensed Miss Hitchener's papa against the Shelleys; assuming that Miss Hitchener's papa (formerly a smuggler) journeyed from his Sussex village to Carnarvonshire, in order to wreak his wrath on the hateful trio; Mr. Denis Florence MacCarthy argues that Miss Hitchener's papa was the villain who tried to shoot Shelley in the little room opening into the shrubbery, and who, some hours later, appeared at the parlour window and shot the bullet through Shelley's flannel shirt:—a bullet that, according to Mr. Denis Florence MacCarthy, must have passed from the window, through the window-curtains, and through Shelley's flannel-shirt, and then turning round in the parlour have come straight back to the wainscot on the window side of the room. Positively Mr. Denis Florence MacCarthy has given this explanation of the Tanyrallt mystery, and been cordially applauded by Shelleyan enthusiasts for the sagacity and reasonableness of his way of showing, that Shelley was shot at in the manner declared by him. This is the way in which Shelley's biography has been dealt with by a ring of gentlemen, of whose acuteness and discretion Mr. James Anthony Froude has the highest opinion.

It is not surprising that Shelley hastened in a few days from the scene of his humiliating exposure. He would have left Carnarvonshire sooner, had he not been detained by want of money. To get the means of flight the young gentleman, who a few days earlier sent 20*l.* to Mr. T. Hookham for the relief of the Hunts, now wrote a hasty note to Mr. T. Hookham for the restoration of the money, in order that he might have the means of getting away from Tremadoc. To this brief note by the excited poet Mrs. Shelley added a postscript in somewhat less agitated style:—

‘ *Tanyralt, March 3rd, 1813.*

‘ DEAR SIR,—I have just escaped an atrocious assassination. Oh send the twenty pounds, if you have it! You will probably hear of me no more!—Your Friend,

PERCY SHELLEY.’

‘ Mr. Shelley is so dreadfully nervous to-day from being up all night that I am afraid what he has written will alarm you very much. We intend to leave this place as soon as possible, as our lives are not safe as long as we remain. It is no common robber we dread, but a person who is actuated by revenge,—who threatens my life and my sister's as well.

If you can send us the money it will add greatly to our comfort.—Sir,
I remain your sincere friend,
H. SHELLEY.'

The printed transcripts of this note and postscript differ in several minute particulars from the printed transcripts of the same writings in Lady Shelley's book; but the only important difference between the two sets of printed transcripts is that, whilst it is given without any date in Lady Shelley's book, the note is given in Hogg's version with an obviously erroneous date.

One of the mistakes of Lady Shelley's inaccurate book is the representation that, in writing the brief note to Mr. T. Hookham, Shelley merely asked the bookseller for a loan of 20*l*. 'It would appear,' the lady says, 'that after sending off the 20*l*. for the Hunt subscription he was in want of money. Hence the request to Mr. Hookham for a little temporary accommodation to enable him to make the necessary removal from Tanyrallt.' It is, however, certain that Shelley wished the receiver of his note to regard him as asking for the restoration of *the* 20*l*. sent a few days earlier to Bond Street, as a contribution to the Hunt fund. It has been already remarked that the letter accompanying this remittance to Mr. Hookham for the Hunt Fund was dated, 'February, 1813,' without a note of the particular day. Hence the precise day on which the money was despatched from Tanyrallt to London is unknown. But there is evidence for fixing the approximate date of the remittance. On 7th February, 1813, Shelley wrote to Hogg from Tanyrallt, '*Mab* has gone on, but slowly, although she is nearly finished.' In the subsequent letter to Mr. Hookham, accompanying the contribution to the Hunt Fund, Shelley says, '*Queen Mab* is finished and transcribed.' Consequently between the date of the earlier letter and the composition of the later epistle, Shelley had *finished* and *transcribed* his poem,—work that may be computed to have given him occupation for a fortnight. This computation would give the 22nd February as the approximate date of the letter, accompanying the remittance for the Hunt Fund, to Mr. Hookham. Written and posted on Monday, 22nd February at Tanyrallt, or Tremadoc, the letter would start on its journey by mail for London in the early morning of Tuesday, 23rd February, and arriving in London on the evening or night of Thursday, 25th February, would be delivered in Old Bond Street on the morning of Friday, 26th February—the morning of the very day, on whose night the first of the imaginary

attacks was made by the imaginary assassin at Tanyrallt. According to this calculation Shelley found himself in urgent need of the money he had so recklessly given away, just twenty-four hours after the note or notes for the money came to the hands of the Bond-Street bookseller.

There are differences between Hogg's transcript of the assassination-note to Mr. Hookham and Lady Shelley's transcript of the same note. One of the discrepancies is that Lady Shelley gives us 'Oh! send me 20*l.*, if you have it,' whereas Hogg gives us 'O send the twenty pounds, if you have it.' Whichever of the two versions is taken, it is clear that 'if you have it' signifies 'if you have not parted with it to the Hunt Fund Committee,' and that Shelley was asking for the return of his own money. As he had no reason to suppose the prosperous bookseller might be without twenty pounds either in his till or at the bank, by 'if you have it' Shelley cannot have meant 'if you are the possessor of so much money.' Affording no indication that Shelley felt he was putting himself under a pecuniary obligation to the man of business, the language of the note precludes the assumption that he was asking outright for a loan of money. Though he may have felt, and probably did feel, that his note would move Mr. Hookham to lend him 20*l.* if he had parted with the subscribed 20*l.*, Shelley asked for the restoration of his own 20*l.* Much the same may be said of Mrs. Shelley and her postscript. Instead of writing as though she and her husband were asking Mr. Hookham to do them a considerable kindness, she wrote as though she were merely asking for their own money.

When the assassination-note came to Mr. Hookham's hands on the morning of Tuesday, 3rd March, he had passed Shelley's gift on to the Hunt Fund. In his inability to return the subscribed money, the bookseller sent him 20*l.* as a loan; a loan which Shelley acknowledged from Bangor Ferry, on 6th March, 1813, in terms affording proof that the present writer has not misconstrued the assassination-note. Lady Shelley's printed transcript of the letter from Bangor Ferry, makes Shelley write thus,—

'From the tenor of your letter I augur' (*argue*?) 'that you have applied the 20*l.* I sent to the benefit of the Hunts. By your kindness and generosity we are perfectly relieved from all pecuniary difficulties. We only wanted a little breathing time, which the rapidity

of our persecutions was unwilling to allow us. We shall readily repay the 20*l*. when I hear from my correspondent in London; but when can I repay the friendship, the disinterestedness, and the zeal of your confidence?’

Mr. Hookham having sent Shelley 20*l*. as a loan, instead of returning the subscribed money, the poet argues from the bookseller’s action and epistle, that the latter has ‘applied the 20*l*.’ (sent for that purpose) ‘to the benefit of the Hunts.’

Within a few hours of writing the assassination-note to Mr. Hookham, Shelley wrote to Mr. Williams, begging for 25*l*. he needed for the payment of ‘little debts;’ observing in the same note, ‘I am surprised that the wretch who attacked me has not been heard of. Surely enquiries have not been sufficiently general, or particular?’

Whilst Mrs. Shelley’s words, ‘Mr. Shelley is so dreadfully nervous to-day, *from being up all night*,’ indicate that the assassination-note to Mr. Hookham was written on the morrow of the imaginary attacks at Tanyrallt, the manner in which Shelley here refers to measures for discovering the assassin shows that the note to Mr. Williams must have been written at a time when ‘the investigations’ were in an early stage of their progress to a damnatory conclusion. Had he known of the discovery of the bullet-mark in the wainscot, Shelley could scarcely have suggested that the investigations of the case had not been sufficiently ‘particular.’ A few hours later, when he heard how particular they had been, his slight face must by turns have flushed with annoyance and then whitened with shame.

The evidence is abundant that Shelley was touched acutely by the shame of his position, during the last days of his sojourn in Carnarvonshire. There is a pathetic note of sincerity in one passage of the insincere letter he wrote from Bangor Ferry to the bookseller of Old Bond Street;—the passage in which he declared he was less delighted by the arrival of Mr. Hookham’s remittance, because it rescued him from ‘a situation of peculiar perplexity,’ than because it assured him he still retained the confidence of at least one friend, whose generous conduct ‘made amends to’ his ‘feelings, wounded by the suspicion, coldness, and villany of the world.’ It was thus that the young man, with a singular aptitude for thinking himself persecuted by any one who presumed to call him to order, spoke of his Carnarvonshire neighbours, because they were offended

by his attempt to trifle with their credulity. Those of them who kept out of his way, or otherwise showed a disinclination to speak to him of his latest escapade, were frigid, unfeeling, hard-hearted. Those, who hinted their inability to see how a bullet issuing from a pistol pointed due south could take a course due north, were meanly suspicious. Those, who frankly declared their disbelief of the assassination-story, were sheer villains. Though the discovery of the bullet-mark in a place it could not have reached, after passing from the window through his night-dress, must have convinced him (if he needed to be convinced) that the ball had issued from his own pistol, he persisted in declaring the ball had proceeded from the weapon of his imaginary assailant. 'The ball,' he wrote from Bangor Ferry, 'of the assassain's pistols (he fired at me twice), penetrated my night-gown and pierced the wainscot;'—omitting to add, for his correspondent's information, that the ball struck the wainscot in a way proving the bullet to have issued from his own pistol. As might be expected of the young man, who three years earlier had declared his intention to have recourse to deception because it would answer his purpose, and just three months earlier had declared his intention to write a wheedling letter to the Duke of Norfolk because he might get some money by doing so, Shelley stuck to his erroneous statements when he must have known them to be misstatements, however much he may have been under the influence of pure hallucination, when he first uttered them. His stubborn adherence to the misstatements, in the letter to Mr. Hookham, is rendered the more offensive by the Pecksniffian style in which he, in the same letter, proclaims his delight in contemplating truth and virtue. 'If,' he remarks, 'the discovery of truth be a pleasure of singular purity, how far surpassing is the discovery of virtue!' In the same vein he observes in the postscript,—'Though overwhelmed with our distresses, we are by no means indifferent to those of liberty and virtue!!!'

(7.)—DUBLIN AND KILLARNEY.

Preserving amidst his varied distresses this honourable concern for the interests of liberty and virtue, Shelley journeyed from Bangor to Holyhead, and after a tedious and rough sea-passage (of forty hours duration) arrived on Tuesday, 9th March, 1813, at Dublin, where he passed several days at 35 Cuffe Street, Stephen's Green, the residence of Mr. John Lawless.

Ignorant of his friend's intimacy with the Irishman of letters, who in 1813 was at work on the *Compendium of the History of Ireland*, Hogg may well have been at a loss how to account for Shelley's second visit to the people, whose wrongs he had failed to redress with two pamphlets and a broadside. But with their imperfect knowledge of the poet's relations with honest Jack Lawless, the readers of this page can readily discover motives for the second visit to the land of greenness and thralldom. There is no positive evidence that Shelley procured money either from Mr. Medwin or anyone else for the publication of a voluminous *History of Ireland*. But a *Compendium* (though scarcely a voluminous one) of *Irish History* was produced by honest Jack Lawless in 1814; and twenty-eight years later, Frederick William Conway (who was editor of the *Dublin Weekly Messenger* in 1812-13, with good opportunities for observing the nature of honest Jack's intercourse with the immediate heir to one of the first fortunes of England), referred to Shelley in the *Dublin Evening Post* (November 17th, 1842), as having been 'made the pecuniary dupe of a person not less sincere in his politics, but in money matters less honest,'—words that unquestionably referred to honest Jack Lawless's pecuniary dealings with the youthful poet. Other evidence has already been given that Lawless's friendly relations with Shelley were attended with pecuniary arrangements. Harum-scarum youngster though he was, Shelley would scarcely have given his Lynton landlady the draft on 'Lord Cloncurry's brother,' without any grounds for thinking that Jack Lawless was under an obligation to honour the writing. One would like to know more of honest Jack's literary and financial relations with the immediate heir to one of the first fortunes of England; but enough is known to justify readers in assuming that, besides going to Ireland in March, 1813, to receive the solace of his friend's sympathy with his distress, Shelley went to 35 Cuffe Street, Stephen's Green, Dublin, to see how his 'literary friend' was getting on with 'the work,' that on its publication could not fail to 'produce great profits.'

It is in the reader's memory that Hogg promised to visit the Shelleys in Carnarvonshire, and pass a few days with them at Tanyrallt, in March, 1813,—an arrangement that could not be carried out, when the poet, with his wife and sister-in-law, had left Wales for Ireland. To spare him the annoyance (similar

to the annoyance Godwin endured half-a-year earlier) of journeying to Tanyrallt, only to find they had departed, Mrs. Shelley had given Hogg timely information of the circumstances which had determined her and her husband to fly to Ireland. As the letter, which afforded him this information, was 'written from Tanyrallt, a day or two after the catastrophe,' Hogg was guilty of a curious slip when (writing from memory of the lost epistle) he declared that, to the best of his recollection, apart from the different date, it was 'precisely similar, word for word,' indeed, to the letter Harriett wrote to Mr. Hookham of Old Bond Street, from Dublin on the 12th (Lady Shelley says 11th) of March, giving the details of the alleged attacks. As Harriett's later letter to Mr. Hookham began with the words, 'My Dear Sir, We arrived here last Tuesday, after a most tedious passage, during the whole of which time we were dreadfully ill,' it cannot have corresponded so precisely, as Hogg represents, with her earlier letter from Tanyrallt. Had the Shelleyan enthusiasts noticed this droll slip, they would have discovered in it yet another proof of Hogg's incomparable villany, instead of attributing the excessive statement to the writer's honest purpose of saying emphatically that, in so far as it related to the alleged attempts at assassination, the later epistle to Mr. Hookham seemed like a copy of the earlier letter to him. It appeared also that Harriett (*not* Shelley) wrote similar accounts of the assassination-incidents either from Tanyrallt or Ireland, to other persons, besides Mr. Hookham and Hogg. 'I have been informed,' says the biographer, 'that she also sent to other persons a narrative of the nightly fears in the same terms, writing descriptive circulars, and dispatching them in different directions.' Why were these letters of intelligence written by Harriett instead of her husband, who certainly *was* the natural and fittest person to put on record the matters, so closely touching his honour? Though she made it to one of her correspondents, readers may smile at the statement, that Harriett wrote the letters, in order to spare her husband the pain of recalling again and again the horrors of that awful night.

Having made arrangements for the long journey to Carnarvonshire, Hogg determined to make the longer trip to Dublin, in accordance with his friends' entreaties that he would join them at 35 Cuffe Street. The result of the determination was, that some few days later he experienced in the Irish metropolis just such a disappointment as William Godwin had experienced

at Lynton. On coming to Cuffe Street, after an unusually rough and trying journey, he learnt that the Shelleys, with Miss Westbrook, had gone off to Killarney. Of course he lost no time in asking the fugitives, through the post, why they had treated him so unhandsomely, and whilst awaiting their reply amused himself as he best could in exploring Dublin, and studying the manners and humours of the people with whom he became acquainted, chiefly through Jack Lawless's friendly offices. For a moment readers of this page may well imagine, that Shelley had relapsed into his former hallucination respecting Hogg's intentions towards Harriett, and had carried her off to Killarney in order to keep her out of his way. But Shelley's action, on hearing of his friend's arrival in Dublin, disposes of the suspicion. There had been misunderstanding on the part of the Shelleys, attended with uncertainty whether Hogg would cross the sea. A sudden whim for visiting Killarney was enough to convert this uncertainty respecting his purpose into a confidence that he would not come to them. So off they went to Killarney, in the very worst season for viewing the Lakes, a few days before Hogg appeared at Jack Lawless's door.

Mr. Lawless advised Hogg to run to Killarney and join his friends there; but Hogg did not think it advisable to spend money in running south after the trio who might have already started for the Giant's Causeway. After spending nearly all the time and money at his disposal, the young Templar returned to London without coming to the presence of the people he had travelled so far to see; but not without gathering materials for a singularly vivid and humorous account of life and manners in Dublin seventy years since. Bidding his Irish acquaintances adieu, Hogg started on his homeward journey some four-and-twenty hours before Shelley and Harriett arrived at the Cork Hotel, Dublin, after covering two hundred and forty English miles in less than forty-eight hours. Intelligence of Hogg's appearance in Dublin having come to them at noon on Monday, 29th March, 1813, Shelley and his wife (now within three calendar months of her accouchement), without Miss Westbrook, started for the capital, posting to Cork, where they caught the mail that deposited them in Dublin at 3 p.m. of Wednesday, 31st March. Though Lady Shelley says they did not return to London till May, 1813, it is certain that Shelley and Harriett were at 23 Chapel Street, Grosvenor Square, in the second week of April.

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greater precision and elegance ; such alterations in fact as are looked for in a new edition of a work by an author, who holds steadily to the principles and argumentative details of the original composition. Can stronger evidence be required that the tract was a serious and genuine declaration of the writer's views in 1811, and that in the spring of 1813 he held the same views about *The Necessity of Atheism* as he held in the spring of the earlier year?

The Note, headed ' Even love is sold,' contains the following passages of especial interest:—

' Not even the intercourse of the sexes is exempt from the despotism of positive institution. Law pretends even to govern *the indisciplinable wanderings of passion*, to put fetters on the clearest deductions of reason, and, by appeals to the will, to subdue *the involuntary affections* of our nature. *Love is inevitably consequent upon the perception of loveliness.*

' *How long then ought the sexual connection to last ? What law ought to specify the extent of the grievances which should limit its duration ? A husband and wife ought to continue so long united as they love each other : any law which should bind them to cohabitation for one moment after the decay of their affection, would be a most intolerable tyranny, and the most unworthy of toleration. How odious an usurpation of the right of private judgment should that law be considered, which should make the ties of friendship indissoluble, in spite of the caprices, the inconstancy, the fallibility, and capacity for improvement of the human mind. And by so much would the fetters of love be heavier and more unendurable than those of friendship, as love is more vehement and capricious, more dependent on those delicate peculiarities of imagination, and less capable of reduction to the ostensible merits of the object.*

' But if happiness be the object of morality, of all human unions and disunions ; if the worthiness of every action is to be estimated by the quantity of pleasurable sensation it is calculated to produce, then the connection of the sexes is so long sacred as it contributes to the comfort of the parties, and is naturally dissolved when its evils are greater than its benefits. There is nothing immoral in this separation. Constancy has nothing virtuous in itself, independently of the pleasure it confers, and partakes of the temporizing spirit of vice in proportion as it endures tamely moral defects of magnitude in the object of its indiscreet choice. Love is free : to promise for ever to love the same woman, is not less absurd than to promise to believe the same creed : such a vow, in both cases, excludes us from all inquiry. The language of the votarist is this : *The woman I now love may be infinitely inferior to many others ; the creed I now profess may be a mass of errors and absurdities, but I exclude myself from all future informa-*

tion as to the amiability of the one and the truth of the other, resolving blindly, and in spite of conviction, to adhere to them. Is this the language of delicacy and reason? Is the love of such a frigid heart of more worth than its belief?

'Prostitution is the legitimate offspring of marriage and its accompanying errors. Chastity is a monkish and evangelical superstition, a greater foe to natural temperance even than unintellectual sensuality; it strikes at the root of all domestic happiness, and consigns more than half of the human race to misery, that some few may monopolize according to law. A system could not well have been devised more studiously hostile to human happiness than marriage.

'I conceive that, from the abolition of marriage, the fit and natural arrangement of sexual connection would result. I by no means assert that the intercourse would be promiscuous: on the contrary; it appears, from the relation of parent to child, that this union is generally of long duration, and marked above all others with generosity and self-devotion. But this is a subject which it is perhaps premature to discuss. That which will result from the abolition of marriage, will be natural and right; because choice and change will be exempted from restraint.'

After perusing this Note of *Queen Mab*, readers who would have a perfect view of Shelley's opinions (in 1812-16) respecting the relations of the sexes, should look at the letter he wrote from Lynton, on 17th August, 1812, to Sir James Lawrence (*alias* the Chevalier de Lawrence), the eccentric *littérateur* who is chiefly memorable at the present date for his *Empire of the Nairs*.

From this letter and Note of *Queen Mab*, it appears that when, by his own admission, he was living happily with the *beautiful* girl, whom he had illuminated out of the Christian faith and instructed to regard the rite and obligations of marriage with levity, the chivalric Shelley held these views touching the intercourse of the sexes:—

(1) The wanderings of amatory passion are indisciplinable, and every attempt to stay those wanderings of desire is a futile effort 'to subdue the involuntary affections of human nature.'

(2) 'Love' being 'inevitably consequent upon the perception of loveliness,' it is natural and necessary for a sensitive and rightly constituted man to regard with love every woman in whom he perceives a high degree of loveliness.

(3) Love lying no less completely than religious belief beyond the domain of volition, it is no less absurd for a man 'to promise for ever to love the same woman' than for him 'to

promise to believe the same creed,' as circumstances may at any moment put it beyond his power to keep the promise.

(4) A man's obligation to fulfil an engagement being necessarily dependent on his power to do so, it follows from the nature of things that on becoming unable to love any longer the woman he has promised to love steadily, a man ceases to be bound by the promise.

(5) On ceasing to love her, every man should be at liberty to withdraw from the society of his wife and take a congenial mate.

(6) It being immoral for a man to enter into engagements without a reasonable prospect of being able to fulfil them, more especially into engagements affecting in a high degree the happiness of the person or persons with whom he makes them; and the conditions of human nature precluding every human creature from a reasonable certainty of being able to love the same person for ever, it is immoral for a man and woman to promise to love one another for ever, *i.e.* till death, as influences lying wholly beyond their control may at any moment take from either of them the power of fulfilling his or her part of the contract.

(7) The moral and reasonable man's largest promise of enduring affection to the woman of his choice should be nothing more than a sincere declaration, that his passion is so strong as to justify him in declaring it a state of feeling likely to endure for a considerable period.

(8) Love being a more or less transient state of the affections, marriage ought to be replaced by Free Love, *i.e.* by cohabitation so arranged that either party to the affectionate league is free to retire from the association at will.

The principal arguments by which Shelley brought himself to this conclusion comprise,—(a) Arguments based on consideration of the misery and moral injury coming to spouses, who are constrained to live together after ceasing to love one another; (b) arguments based on consideration of the happiness withheld by matrimonial law from uncongenial spouses, who, were it not for that law, would part company and find felicity or contentment with other mates; (c) arguments drawn from consideration of the moral injury resulting from legal wedlock to spouses, who are rendered careless of one another's feelings by the sense of security from the proper and natural punishment of habitual perversity and ill-humour; whereas the overbearing husband

would restrain his tyrannical disposition, if he knew his wife could leave him should he worry her beyond endurance, and in like manner the scolding wife would put a bridle on her tongue, if she knew her lord could dismiss her at a moment's notice, and engage another woman in her place; (*d*) arguments arising from a consideration of the misery and evils resulting from marriage to individuals, other than unhappily mated husbands and wives.

(9) Of all his arguments against marriage, the one which Shelley valued perhaps most highly was the argument, grounded on his conviction that lawful wedlock and its attendant errors were accountable for prostitution, and that to sweep away the former would be to put an end to the latter. Were matrimony put on a natural footing, and made an estate from which the dissatisfied spouse could retire as easily as from any ordinary commercial contract, young men, no longer afraid to commit themselves to the perils of familiar association with modest and accomplished women, would cease to have intercourse with abandoned women. Liberated from the debasing sentiment of chastity, which retains them in servile bondage to men whom they secretly abhor, women would pass without dishonour to men, whom they could love and who would gladly provide themselves with virtuous mates on reasonable terms. The men put at liberty to take new spouses would often find them in girls, who under the existing restrictions and temptations become lodgers in immoral houses. Under Free-Love 'the social evil' would soon disappear, partly through the livelier masculine repugnance to feminine immorality, and partly through the larger demand for virtuous female spouses.

(10) Far from thinking the abolition of marriage would result in a state of things that would not differ greatly from promiscuous intercourse of the sexes, on account of the general brevity of the periods of cohabitation, Shelley was disposed to think that under Free Love the majority of couples would have no desire to separate, when they had been drawn closely together by common interest in common offspring. It would still remain the rule for the mated pair to live together till death; but under Free Love they would live together from preference and mutual affection, instead of living together from compulsion and in spite of mutual dislike. Still he was of course prepared for much changing and interchanging of spouses. The freedom he

required was a freedom to be enjoyed and used, as well as talked about.

(11) When it occurred to John Milton that Freedom of Divorce would be abused by many a wicked man, in order to get quit of a faithful and virtuous wife, he comforted himself by reflecting that even in so evil a case the freedom would work advantageously for the good and injured woman, by relieving her from the necessity of living under the dominion of a bad husband. In like manner had any one objected to Shelley, that under Free Love a woman would often desert a good spouse from mere wantonness, and that a man would often desert a virtuous help-mate from sheer profligacy, he would have answered, 'Better for the good man to be at liberty to seek for a woman worthy of his love, and for the good woman to be at liberty to find an honest mate.'

(12) It is obvious that the Free Love, which Shelley recommended as a wholesome substitute for antiquated wedlock, would permit the ordinary seducer to pursue his favourite diversion with absolute impunity; and that Shelley, with all his avowed abhorrence of seducers, would at least have regarded leniently several practices, that in the opinion of most men amount to seduction. In ordinary parlance, the man who takes a hitherto virtuous girl under his protection, and uses her as his mistress, is termed her seducer, and the proceeding by which the girl is brought to so discreditable a position is called her seduction. For instance, though he would have indignantly denied the charge, Byron's intercourse with Claire would by most persons be regarded as a sufficient reason for holding him guilty of an offence of which even libertines do not like to be thought capable. Shelley certainly cannot have used the word in this sense when he wrote to the Chevalier de Lawrence that seduction was 'an enormous and desolating crime, of which he should shudder to be accused;' for after showing positive sympathy with Byron's tenderness for Claire in the earlier stages of the fleeting passion, he exerted himself to bring about a renewal of their association, just as though he were a brother set on arranging some discord between his sister and her husband. It is not easy to see in what sense he used the word when he wrote to the Chevalier that 'seduction could have no meaning in a rational state of society.' Questioned on the point, he would probably have

said that to pursue a woman for purely sensual ends, with false assurances of sentimental preference and affectionate devotion, was 'the enormous and desolating crime.'

(13) In obedience to sincere and vehement passion for a woman, whether she were maid or wife, every man was by the Shelleyan doctrine at liberty to solicit her for corresponding affection, and to his utmost, in all truthful ways, to render himself no less loveable in her eyes than she seemed loveable to him. Whilst thinking that in the majority of cases such a passion would prove of considerable duration, he saw also that in a minority of cases it would speedily wane and perish, either through the discovery of previously existing, though unobserved, defects in its object, or through the mental, moral, or physical deterioration of the idolized person, or through the attachment's extinction by a more powerful passion for a more perfect and loveable being. On the occurrence of any such contingency, Shelley was of opinion that, on seeing it would be more conducive to *his own* enjoyment of life to withdraw from a no longer congenial mate, a man should act promptly in doing so, and not be restrained from pursuing his own happiness by any pitiful notion that honour and morality required him to remain in discontent, out of regard to the feelings and interests of his conjugal partner. 'Constancy,' in his opinion, 'had nothing virtuous in itself, independently of the pleasure it conferred' on the persisting person. In ridiculing George the Third's

'household virtue,' most uncommon,
Of constancy to a bad, ugly woman,'

Byron placed conjugal constancy amongst the domestic virtues. Shelley took another view of the quality, which, appearing to him (at its best) as nothing better than a particular kind of selfish prudence, 'partook of the temporizing spirit of vice in proportion as it endured tamely moral defects of magnitude in the objects of its indiscreet choice.'

(14) It must be remembered that Shelley did not propound these views as mere theories for discussion amongst philosophers, without any serious desire that they should become rules of personal conduct under existing social circumstances, but as principles of social science and morals, on which men would do well to act. Unlike William Godwin, who backed out of his own more fantastic theories as soon as the accidents of

life afforded him a good opportunity for putting them in practice, Shelley was 'thorough' at this period of his life, and ready at any moment to do any wild thing which, with boyish impetuosity and self-sufficiency, he had talked himself into thinking a thing that ought to be done. Holding these views in the spring of 1813, he acted upon them in the summer of 1814.

(15) To this extreme point had he gone in the social philosophy of the Free Lovers, the more moderate of whom discovered much to question, and no little to dissent from, in his manifesto on matters touching the intercourse of the sexes. But far as he had gone in Free Love, Shelley was appointed to go much further, and in the same department of social inquiry to arrive some three or four years later at a conclusion, far stronger and more startling than anything to be found in *Queen Mab's* Antimatrimonial Note.

There is no little of direct discrepancy and general confusedness in the many things told us by the authorities respecting Shelley's several places of residence in London during the season of 1813. To believe all the authorities tell us is to believe that, after resting for a night or two in Chapel Street, he and Harriett lived for several weeks (and even months) in different London hotels, then for several months in lodgings in Half-Moon Street, and then for several weeks in lodgings at Pimlico, and also to believe that they lived some time in Cooke's Hotel, Dover Street, and in the Half-Moon-Street lodging-house simultaneously, before they settled at Bracknell, in the third week of July, 1813;—which clearly is more than could have been accomplished, even by such singular persons as the Shelleys, between the 7th or 8th of April and the 20th or 21st of the following July.

The conflict of the authorities respecting Shelley's several homes during these fifteen weeks is in a large measure due to the indiscretion of writers, who infer from the dates of letters that he was residing at the hotel where the epistles were written. For instance, from the dates or post-marks of letters written by the poet in May, 1813, to his father and the Duke of Norfolk, and to Mr. Medwin of Horsham on 16th June, 21st June, 28th June, and 6th July, of the same year, it has been inferred that he was living in Cooke's Hotel, Dover Street, instead of merely frequenting the hotel, in those months,—an inference that will

be declined by readers who remember how hotels were used by their mere frequenters in the early days of the present century. To those who remember that between the middle of April and the middle of July, Shelley lodged successively in Half-Moon Street and Pimlico, and occupied each set of rooms for several weeks, the dates of the aforementioned letters are mere evidence that, whilst sleeping in Half-Moon Street and Pimlico, he was a frequenter of the hotel, in which he had previously occupied a bedroom, and that he continued to use the hotel as a place of address for some of his correspondents, also as a place for interview with those of his acquaintances, whom he did not care to receive at his lodgings.

It follows that I question whether the accouchement, resulting in the birth of Shelley's first-born child, took place at the hotel in Dover Street on 27th June, 1813, though he wrote on the following day from the hotel:—

'MY DEAR SIR,—I am happy to inform you that Mrs. Shelley has been safely delivered of a little girl, and is now rapidly recovering. I would not leave her in her present state, and therefore still consider your proposal of fixing the interview in London as the most eligible.'

In saying that he could not leave his wife in her present state, the writer can scarcely have meant he could not leave for a few hours the house in which she was lying, though affectionate concern forbade him to leave her for so long a time as would be consumed by journeying to Horsham and back. Notwithstanding some statement to the contrary, which had come under his notice, Hogg remained under the impression that Harriett's first *accouchement* took place at the Pimlico lodgings, and (for reasons with which I will not trouble the reader, as the question is of scarcely any importance) I have little doubt Hogg was right on this point.

In reviewing Shelley's course during the spring and summer of 1813, readers may be certain that, after resting a night or two in Chapel Street, he stayed for awhile (perhaps a fortnight) with his wife at Cooke's Hotel; that he then went with her into the lodgings in Half-Moon Street, which they occupied for several weeks (possibly eight or nine weeks;—in speaking of them as living in the Half-Moon Street for 'several months,' Hogg used too ample an expression); that, on leaving Half-Moon Street, the young couple went to the Pimlico lodging-house,

before going to Bracknell; and that after ceasing to reside at the Doyer-Street Hotel, Shelley often went to it in May, June, and July, to see friends and write letters. It is, of course, conceivable that he lived at the hotel for some days and nights between the stay in Half-Moon Street, and the migration to Pimlico, and again between his withdrawal from the Pimlico lodging-house and his retirement to Bracknell, where he had his home, towards the end of July, 1813.

The state of Shelley's purse is enough to account for the fact that he and Harriett journeyed from Killarney to London, unattended by Miss Westbrook, whom they left in charge of 'the many useful volumes' which the trio carried with them from Tanyrallt to Dublin, and from Dublin to the South of Ireland, where Eliza possibly sold them for the money that enabled her in the course of a few days to follow her sister and brother-in-law. Having barely enough money in hand for the charges of posting to Cork and 'mailing' on to Dublin, Shelley and Harriett would have been constrained to leave their sister behind, even had they wished for her company. It is, however, certain that, whilst Shelley was greatly delighted, Harriett was in no degree pained by the circumstances which enabled them to escape for a brief while from Miss Westbrook's society.

Printed on the fine paper especially ordered by the author (for the gratification of his natural pride in the offspring of his brain, and also, as he averred, that the work might be more attractive to the sons and daughters of aristocrats), the first 'bound copies' of *Queen Mab* may be assumed to have come to Shelley's hands soon after he took possession of the lodgings in Half-Moon Street. It may also be assumed that, in the earlier weeks of their residence in the thoroughfare, which seventy years since enjoyed the favour of fashion, both Harriett and Shelley found congenial diversion in sending out copies of the new book to men of letters whom they knew, to men of letters whom they wished to know, and to those persons of their small circle of acquaintance who, without being ambitious of literary distinction, were of a philosophical quality that rendered the young poet desirous of standing high in their regard, or of converting them to his particular views.

An early copy was despatched to Byron, still in the enjoyment of the celebrity, pertaining to him as the author of *Childe Harold*. But Byron failed to acknowledge the book, as he, of

course, and in mere courtesy, would have done, had it not been for the miscarriage of the letter, which would have given him Shelley's address. Having been on his pilgrimage during the occurrences, that had rendered the younger poet somewhat (but only in a slight degree) notorious, it is more than probable that, on looking for the first time on *Queen Mab's* title-page, Byron had never heard anything of Shelley's personal story,—never even heard his name. Anyhow, Byron took no notice of the book. To Shelley, yearning to know the author of *Childe Harold*, and ignorant of the circumstances that were accountable for the apparent disrespect, Byron's silence must have been extremely mortifying.

Society, in the larger and higher sense of the word, of course, knew nothing of the poem which appeared in no bookseller's shop, and which would have been inquired for in vain at the circulating libraries, whilst it was being secretly lent under the rose to their friends by the hundred or more persons, who had been so fortunate as to get copies of the surreptitious publication. It is unknown how many of the 250 copies were thus floated into covert circulation; but it is certain that the work was read and talked about by a sufficient number of people (the majority of them being Londoners), for Shelley to acquire from it,—at least, in the cliques and coteries of literary London,—a certain measure of poetical reputation, and a recognized place amongst the young and rising poets of the period. In certain circles the precautions he had taken for his safety quickened the desire to see the daring poem, and win a personal introduction to the author. One can readily believe what Hogg tells us of the way in which strangers of both sexes forced their way into the Half-Moon-Street lodgings, in order to make the acquaintance of the author of *Queen Mab*; but, in professing to be offended and irked by these intrusive worshipers of his genius, Shelley was no more sincere than when he affected, in one of his letters to Godwin, to have perused with indifference the eulogia of the article which, although he knew the commendations to have proceeded from honest Jack Lawless's pen, delighted him so greatly, that he entreated Miss Hitchener to compass its reproduction in the Sussex newspapers.

Though she now and then gave signs of emancipation from Miss Westbrook's authority, Harriett still lived in friendliness

with the admirable sister, who, whilst residing again under her father's roof in Chapel Street, seldom allowed a day to pass without spending a few hours with her child in Half-Moon Street. That Shelley had, at least for the moment, passed from her control, Miss Westbrook cannot have been insensible; but, as the rapid development of Harriet's person required more and more liberal rearrangements of her dresses, it is probable that the elder sister cheered herself by looking forward to a time, when she would be in a position to reclaim Percy from a state of mutiny, and re-establish her dominion over him. In the meantime, though she came almost daily to her sister's lodgings, Miss Westbrook did nothing for the comfort of its proper occupants, who, at an expenditure which, with good management, would have maintained them in luxury, lived as wastefully and comfortlessly as any young couple of their condition ever lived, on the drawing-floor of a West-End lodging-house. In partaking of such dinners as Harriett set before him in the front drawing-room, Hogg certainly gave no ordinary proof of attachment to his friends. To say that Shelley was a stricter vegetarian in the spring and summer of 1813, is not to say much of his abstinence from the more luxurious fare of his own table; for the bread and raisins, the penny-buns and raspberry tartlets, from the nearest confectioner's shop, were the daintiest food offered to his guests, either in the Half-Moon-Street or Pimlico lodgings. The poet's favourite food at this stage of his career was cold bread-poultice (made like the poultices of medical practice), which he devoured with the keenest relish, after sprinkling them with powdered lump sugar and grated nutmeg. A few months later he was living chiefly on pulse.

The strange people who gathered about Shelley in the two sets of rooms were, with two or three exceptions, of no finer quality than the fare with which he regaled them. For the most part, enthusiastic vegetarians, and fervid believers in the perfectibility of the human species, they exercised themselves in debating the best and quickest means of raising mankind to the perfection of which it was capable, and in disputing whether it was lawful for vegetarians to eat eggs and butter, to drink milk and put cream to their strawberries. In comparison with most of the men, who talked excitedly on these momentous questions, the Chevalier de Lawrence was a discreet and sober intellect. But the men were surpassed by the women of

the coterie in piquant eccentricity and grotesque fancifulness. With her placid interest in self-murder, and her avowed purpose of putting an end to her own existence, should it become a few degrees less tolerable, Harriett may be presumed to have sympathized with the dejection of the equally languid and miserable gentlewoman, who would have perished under the burden of her imaginary woes, had it not been for the solace of Petrarch sonnets.

Another gentlewoman of the circle was chiefly remarkable for holding that, to enjoy perfect health of mind and body, it was necessary for the British matron to begin every day by sitting for three or four hours in unqualified nudity,—hours which, of course, every fair practitioner of nakedness was expected to pass in the strictest privacy; it being further recommended that she should employ them in reading high literature or in writing letters. In society, after telling how she had passed the first three hours of the well-spent morning, she sometimes added, for the edification of listeners, ‘I feel so innocent during the rest of the day.’ Finding the regimen of matutinal nakedness so beneficial to herself, this exemplary gentlewoman trained her children to go without clothing about the house for the greater part of the day. One of the drollest pages of Hogg’s delightful book tells how, on hearing Shelley’s familiar rap at the front door, this lady’s brood of infants (a twelve-years old boy, a girl *ætat.* ten, a boy *ætat.* nine, and two wee girls, the younger of whom was only five years of age) rushed downstairs in perfect nudity, in order to greet so favourite a friend even on the door-mat.

But of all the ladies who thronged about Shelley in Half-Moon Street (to Harriett’s perplexity and Eliza Westbrook’s secret wrath), even as women of higher quality crowded round and ‘suffocated’ Byron in the salons of lordly houses, none had more influence over the author of *Queen Mab* from the spring of 1813, to the end of the spring of 1814, than Mrs. Boinville—an Englishwoman by birth and education, who was indebted to a French husband for her style and tastes, as well as for the name which gives her peculiar distinctiveness in the Shelleyan annals. The mother-in-law of Mr. Newton (the vegetarian enthusiast, who, after living in affectionate intimacy with Shelley during the greater part of 1813, quarrelled with him in an early month of the following year), Mrs. Boinville, at the

time of making Shelley's acquaintance, was through her daughter, Cornelia (Mr. Newton's wife), the grandmother of a brood of handsome children. Nor were these children the only evidence that Mrs. Boinville had come to an age when it is unusual for an Englishwoman to conceive a sentimental fondness for a youngster in his nonage. The whiteness of her abundant tresses proclaimed her old enough for grand-maternal dignity. She was, however, a young-looking woman for her age; the contrast of her snow-white hair and comparatively girlish face causing Shelley to name her Maimuna, after the poetical creation of whom it is written in Southey's *Thalaba* :

‘ Her face was as a damsel's face,
And yet her hair was grey.’

Doting on her in 1813, for the perfection of her manners and character, Shelley some five years later remembered Maimuna as a person ‘ whose extreme subtlety and delicacy of understanding ’ were incompatible with perfect guilelessness and constancy. And coming to think less favourably of his whilom spiritual mate, it was natural for the poet to tell others of her insincerity and fickleness.

Admiring her from the first hour of their brief association for an appearance, that combined in so peculiar and piquant a manner the loveliness of youth and age, he delighted in the winning sweetness of her voice, and discovered in her conversation and mien the charms of intellectual subtlety and moral elevation. Concurring with him on the several religious and social questions, that were holding his attention, she exulted in his song no less frankly than he exulted in her beauty. It is no exaggeration to say that the stripling, who still wanted several months of his majority, was platonically enamoured of the woman with snow-white hair and girlish face, whose years cannot have been much under fifty. Pouring into her sympathetic ear the long and stirring tale of his multifarious domestic distresses, he consulted her on nice questions of poetry and metaphysical science, and never conferred with her on such matters without discovering new reasons for admiring the subtlety and self-dependence of her intellect; though it is conceivable that, when he was most deeply impressed by her mental acuteness and originality, she was only returning to

him the thoughts that had come to her from his lips on the previous evening.

Nor was Maimuna the only influence that rendered her house far more agreeable to the youthful poet than his comfortless lodgings in Half-Moon Street, where Eliza became more and more distasteful to her brother-in-law, and Harriett less shapely and beautiful. For the charming and highly sentimental Mrs. Boinville had a scarcely less charming and sentimental sister, as well as a daughter who, without possessing all her mother's excellencies, was not unworthy of so fascinating a parent. In adorative tenderness for Percy, the youngest of these three ladies seems to have surpassed her aunt and equalled Mrs. Boinville. It was she who discovered that, seen from the pavement below, whilst sitting book-in-hand at the little projecting window of the Half-Moon Street drawing-room, Percy would have looked 'like some young lady's lark, hanging outside for air and song,' had he only been provided with 'a pan of clear water and a fresh turf.' Surely the lady who discovered this resemblance must have been the author of the happy thought, that Shelley had the appearance of a moss-rose still drenched by the tears of heaven.

The Pimlico drawing-room would have been a bower of delight to the young poet, had he found no other worshipers there; but it was the favourite gathering place of a coterie of sentimentalists and free-thinkers of both sexes, who rendered the salon even more agreeable to the author of *Queen Mab*, by being at much pains to make him see that he was superlatively acceptable to them. Mr. Hogg may, perhaps, have been justified in thinking meanly of Mrs. Boinville's circle, and in suggesting that before the end of the season Shelley was secretly ashamed of himself for spending so much of his time in it. But the poet, who had long yearned for social recognition, may be pardoned for not being nicely fastidious respecting the quality of the first coterie to welcome and worship him as a man of genius. Moreover, though it may have comprised several arrant charlatans, together with a considerable percentage of individuals to be fairly rated by a humorous annalist as so many sentimental medical students and revolutionary tinkers, the crowd, that thronged Mrs. Boinville's staircase on her evenings of reception, doubtless held a far larger proportion of well-

mannered gentle people, who were all the better company because their social crotchets declared them likely to die in a lunatic asylum. Certainly it contained a fair proportion of clever and lovely girls, whose mental and personal endowments may well have caused the principal poet of the assemblies to recall with a sense of shame, how recently he had hung upon the words of the Hurtspierpoint prophetess. It was at Mrs. Boinville's house that Shelley met the chosen and especially favoured young ladies, with whom (after the departure of the other visitors) he used to drink strong tea and converse on lofty themes from midnight to early dawn, and sometimes from early dawn to broad daylight. On crossing Piccadilly an hour or so after daybreak, as the market-carts rolled slowly towards Covent Garden, it was natural for Shelley to wish his lodgings were something nearer the house he visited at least once in every twenty-four hours; and so wishing, it was natural for him to think it would be well for his dear Harriett's sake, that he should take lodgings in Pimlico, so as to be able to drop in at any moment on the dear Boinvilles for a short call, without leaving her for hours together during the illness that would soon be upon her.

Though I cannot speak positively on the point, I have little doubt that Mrs. Boinville's was the house where Shelley, during this same London season of 1813, caused much commotion by passing down a line of charming young ladies (who were ranged on one side of the drawing-room for the country dance), and closely examining the skin of each of the astonished but unresisting damsels. It was not enough for Shelley to put his eyes within a few inches of each young lady's unconcealed developments, so as to get the closest and clearest view of her neck, shoulders, and bosom. To effect his purpose it was requisite to examine the parts, in which he was greatly interested, by touch as well as by sight. It was not till, with the look and air of a concern no less reverential than pitiful, he had pressed and otherwise felt the skin of several necks, bosoms, and pairs of shoulders, that the hostess, on seeing what he was about, caused him to desist from his too intrusive observations, by assuring him with proper earnestness and gravity, that no one of the lovely damsels standing before him was suffering from elephantiasis.

For some days Shelley had been afflicted by a fancy that he

had caught that rare and terrible disease from an old woman, whom he had met in a stage-coach, and for the preposterous magnitude of whose ankles he could account only by assuming that she was afflicted with elephantiasis in the legs. In vain was he assured by the doctors, whom he consulted on the subject, that he had not caught elephantiasis, and that, had the old woman been a sufferer from the disease in the degree he imagined, she could not have endured the motion of the stage-coach. No doctor, no number of conspiring doctors, could persuade him he had not caught elephantiasis, or make him believe the signs of disease, so easily caught, could not be detected in the skin of persons unaware of their deplorable condition. To prove himself right on the first point, he was ever and again scrutinizing his own skin. To show he was right on the second point, he seized every opportunity of examining the skin of other people. Hence the extraordinary examination of the young ladies, who, in their confidence in the rectitude and innocence of his purpose, were willing to allow him any license requisite for the completion of his inquiries.

Apocryphal biography requires us to believe that Shelley met another disagreeable old woman in a stage-coach,—the old lady whom he at the same time drove out of the carriage and her wits, by seating himself on the floor of the vehicle, and ejaculating with passionate pathos—

‘ For heaven’s sake, let us sit upon the ground,
And tell sad stories of the death of kings!
How some have been deposed, some slain in war,
Some haunted by the ghosts they have deposed,
Some poisoned by their wives, some sleeping killed;
All murdered.’

The story (known to every one) proceeds to tell how in her alarm at the words, the thrilling accents in which they were delivered, and the dolefully maniacal visage of their utterer, the poor old woman screamed to the guard to open the door and allow her to escape from the company of the raving lunatic, who wanted her to join with him in talking about kings and their deaths in so disloyal a fashion; and how, on the door being opened, she cleared herself out of the coach, with her basket of mellow apples and her other basket of onions. There are several versions of this equally piquant and doubtful story. To believe everything in Leigh Hunt’s *Autobiography*, is to believe

that the farce was originally enacted, to the poor woman's terror, in his presence in 'the Hampstead stage,' as he and Shelley were travelling by that vehicle into town. But even if it could be proved that he had no part in the conception of the story, or in the incidents out of which it grew, the fiction would be fitly given as an example of the kind of humour that was acceptable to, perhaps, the least humorous of our supremely great poets; for Shelley told the story so often of himself, that he eventually believed it as thoroughly as any of his numerous fictions about himself.

Whilst Shelley was living in lodgings, and dating some of his letters from Cooke's Hotel, Dover Street, he met his father at least on one occasion in society. The poet and Harriett were lodging in Half-Moon Street, when, on coming there to dine with them by invitation, Hogg was received by Harriett with excuses for the absence of her husband, who was dining at Norfolk House. Having called in the morning at the house, to pay his respects to the Duke, he was asked to return a few hours later to a dinner party. Considerations of prudence having made him accept the invitation Bysshe had gone to the dinner, leaving word that he would get away from the great people at Norfolk House as soon as possible. In Bysshe's absence, therefore, Hogg dined with Harriett, who was reading aloud to him over the tea-cups when, after much vehement rapping at the street door, Shelley rushed into the room, 'tumbling upstairs, with a mighty sound, treading upon his nose, as I accused him of doing, and throwing off his neckcloth, according to custom, stood staring about for some moments, as wondering why he had been in such a hurry.' At the Norfolk House dinner (a large party of men) Percy, sitting at the bottom of the table, found himself next the Earl of Oxford, who (according to Bysshe's account of the affair) inquired of him, 'Who is that very strange old man at the top of the table, sitting next his Grace, who talks so much, so loudly, and in so extraordinary a manner, and all about himself?'

'He is my father, and he is a very strange old man indeed!' replied Shelley, who, on coming away from Norfolk House, was accompanied to the door of his lodgings by the Earl.

The Duke of Norfolk doubtless invited Bysshe to this dinner, in the hope that the meeting of the father and son, at war since the early autumn of 1811, might result in their recon-

ciliation, or at least dispose the Squire to make the youngster a larger allowance, now that he was within a few months of his majority, and likely to have a child in a few weeks. Of course the Duke, under whose surveillance, influence, and approval, the Squire of Field Place had acted towards his son since the spring of 1811, was of opinion that Shelley should show larger consideration for his father's feelings, before asking for a more liberal share of his father's bounty; that concessions on the sire's part must necessarily be preluded by concessions and conciliatory assurances on the part of the son; that the boy, in fact, must return clearly within the lines of filial dutifulness, before looking to his father for paternal sympathy and further pecuniary assistance. At the same time it may be assumed that Shelley's 'wheedling letter,' written from Tanyrallt, had caused the Duke to think the youngster was returning to a reasonable frame of mind, and had determined to make concessions and promises, that would probably end in a satisfactory arrangement of his differences with his father. Hence it came about that, perhaps before the end of April, certainly not much later than the third week of May 1813, Shelley was in negotiation with his father, for a reconciliation that would be beneficial to himself.

It is not surprising that these negotiations were fruitless of better feeling between the father and the son. Since his elopement with Harriett to Edinburgh, Shelley had certainly done nothing to appease his father's wrath. How far the Squire of Field Place had been kept *au courant* with his son's doings in Dublin, at Lynton and Tanyrallt, does not appear; but several circumstances countenance the opinion that of Shelley's doings in those places enough must have come to the Squire's ears to confirm him in his unfavourable opinion of his heir. As Shelley instructed Miss Hitchener to send particulars of his doings in Dublin to the Sussex papers; as he sent the same lady copies of his revolutionary broadside (the *Declaration of Rights*) in order that they should be pasted on the walls of Sussex farmers; as during his first sojourn in Ireland he was incessantly writing to the lady letters, that may be presumed to have afforded much piquant gossip to her Hurstpierpoint acquaintance; as Shelley was at other pains to advertise his friends in Sussex of his Irish doings, the Squire of Field Place must have heard enough of those doings, to be acutely annoyed by them. It cannot have pleased him to hear in the summer of 1812, that

the young schoolmistress had deserted her employment, and gone off to live with his son. Something had probably come to the Squire about that ugly business in Lynton. As Shelley asked the Duke of Norfolk to provide money for the Tremadoc Embankment, and seems to have sought in Sussex for other subscribers to the fund, it must have come to the Squire's knowledge, that his son was busying himself with land-speculators in North Wales;—information which could not fail to confirm the Squire in his opinion, that old Sir Bysshe had done well to require by the codicil to his will, that Percy should resettle the estates A and B, under pain of forfeiting for himself and issue all the interest assigned to him and his issue by the testament. What wonder that the negotiations came to nothing?

That they came to nothing before the end of May, 1813, we know from a letter dated on the 26th day of that month by the Squire of Field Place to his son:—The letter (to be found in *Notes and Queries*: Second Series, vol. vi., p. 405) in which, after declining to have further communication with his son, till the latter should show signs of a change for the better, in respect 'to some of the most unfavourable traits of his character,' the Squire of Field Place remarked that, had he not imagined the change for the better to have already taken place, he should have persisted in his resolution to receive no communication from his dear boy, 'but through His Grace the Duke of Norfolk.' Thus closing the correspondence in terms less lucid than firm; the Member for New Shoreham still declared himself to be his dear boy's 'affectionate father.'

With this epistle the negotiations appear to have come to an end. To those who concur with Mr. Buxton Forman in thinking, that the author of *Queen Mab* and *Laon and Cythna* might under favourable circumstances have been 'the Saviour of the World,' the Squire of Field Place of course appears guilty of egregious impudence and irreverence in presuming to address his sacred son so familiarly; and it must be confessed that 'my dear Boy' appears a most inappropriate description of a young gentleman, worthy of being worshipt with the Deity. To persons, who concur with Mr. Froude, in thinking any extravagances and indiscretions should have been pardoned in Shelley, because he was young and enthusiastic, it must of course appear that, on receiving his son's assurance that he had changed for the better, the Squire of Field Place should have

hastened to Cooke's Hotel, thrown his arms about the dear boy's neck, and settled two thousand a-year upon him. To those of the Shelleyan enthusiasts who, because he lived to write incomparably fine poetry, think Shelley must always have been as faultless as his best verse, should never have been birched by the profane Keate, should never have been called to order by his father, it naturally seems insufferable insolence for a mere Member of Parliament, capable of writing nothing loftier than a barely intelligible letter, to venture to lecture so sublime a son on 'the most unfavourable traits of his character.' But to sober persons, who can enjoy fine poetry without thinking its producers demigods, it is not obvious why the poetic faculty should be held to exempt its possessor from any of the obligations of morality, or why a father should hesitate to reprove his son's misconduct, because the youngster gives promise of developing into a man of genius. Even by those who recognize in Shelley's character and career the resemblance which Mr. Buxton Forman was the first to detect in them, it will be conceded that the historic parallel would be closer, had the poet in his nonage shown more consideration for the feelings of his parents, and greater readiness to 'be subject unto them.'

Of this brief letter nothing, perhaps, is more noteworthy than its announcement that, had it not been for misapprehension respecting his son's temper and attitude, the writer should have declined to receive any communication from him except 'through his Grace the Duke of Norfolk,' on whom he relied for guidance in his chief domestic perplexity, no less than for protection from any social censure and discredit, likely to ensue from unjust reports of his action in respect to that trouble. After hearing so much during the last thirty or forty years of the sufferings Shelley endured from his father's harshness and cruelty, it is well for the world to glance at the other side of the story, and commiserate the pain and shame that came to the Squire of Field Place from his son's perversity and malice. The man may well be compassionated who is constrained to put his honour in the custody of another person, albeit of so august a personage as a duke of the realm. A little sympathy is due to the father, who relied on his patron to protect him from slanderous misrepresentation of his parental character and conduct.

After perusing the epistle, that closed the fruitless negotiations, Shelley sent it to the Duke of Norfolk with a 'wheed-

ling' note (also to be found in *Notes and Queries*: Second Series, vol. vi., p. 405) in which, after suitable expressions of regret for the failure of the Duke's intervention, and similar expressions of gratitude for His Grace's sympathy and good offices, the writer observed,—

'I was prepared to make my father every reasonable concession, but I am not so degraded and miserable a slave, as publicly to disavow an opinion which I believe to be true. Every man of common sense must see that a sudden renunciation of sentiments seriously taken up is as unfortunate a test of intellectual uprightness as can possibly be devised. I take the liberty of enclosing my father's letter for your Grace's inspection. I repeat what I have said from the commencement of this negociation, in which private communications from my father first induced me to engage, that I am willing to concede anything that is reasonable, anything that does not involve a compromise of that self-esteem without which life would be a burden and a disgrace.'

Had he written in this strain of the failure of the negotiation to William Godwin or Hogg, or indeed to almost any one but the Duke of Norfolk, cautious readers would hesitate to infer from the epistle that the Member for New Shoreham had made any demand, so extreme as to justify in any degree the poet's way of referring to it. But in writing to the Duke whom he knew to be cognizant of the terms offered to him by his father, it is scarcely conceivable that Shelley permitted himself to speak of them in a style, that was without even the faintest colour of justification. It does not, however, follow that the Squire had any desire to reduce his son to the position of a 'degraded and miserable slave,' or made any demand to which no young man of honour and sensibility could assent, without losing his self-respect.

In the absence of the evidence, which would alone qualify the reader to take a judicial view of the Squire's requirements, it may be assumed that they comprised some stipulation which, having reference to his son's religious and political sentiments, and going further than the former request for mere abstinence from public controversy, demanded some action which Percy could regard as public recantation of his published opinions. Possibly the unreasonable requirement was that, recalling to his hands every recoverable copy of *Queen Mab*, he should destroy all copies of the book within his reach, and promise never again to put the work, or any similar work, in circulation. Shelley

would not have failed to regard any such condition, as a demand for his 'sudden renunciation of sentiments seriously taken up.' The Shelleyan enthusiasts of course take the expressions of the epistle literally, and argue from them that the proposals he declined with so much spirit and generous resoluteness involved some extravagant and humiliating concession, which should not have been demanded of him. One of the strongest reasons for thinking the zealots err on this point, is the certainty that no such extreme and insolent demand would have been sanctioned by the Duke of Norfolk, whose 'exalted mind' determined the course taken by Mr. Timothy Shelley in the business. I am prepared for evidence that the terms, so warmly rejected by Shelley, were hard terms. But should sufficient evidence ever appear that, in his growing irritation with a singularly exasperating son, the Squire insisted on terms, that besides being hard were cruel and unreasonable, it would still remain for readers to smile contemptuously at the Pecksniffian style in which Shelley (the writer of wheedling letters, who did not blush to declare to his familiar friend his deliberate intention of having recourse to deception) wrote of himself in this particular epistle, as though he were incapable of deviating by a hair's breadth from the straight path of truth.

Another point to be noticed in this curious epistle is Shelley's statement, that the futile negotiation, was a 'negociation, in which private communications from his father first induced him to engage.' As Shelley knew it to be within the Duke's knowledge, whether the overtures for the fruitless negotiation came from him to his father, or from his father to him, he may be assumed to have written accurately respecting the preliminary 'private communications.' It may therefore be taken for certain that the Squire (acting doubtless at the Duke of Norfolk's instance) made the overtures to his son for a friendly settlement of their differences;—a fact indicative of a disposition, rather than of an indisposition, on the Squire's part, to come to friendly terms with his son. None the less certain, however, is it that Shelley himself (acting on Hogg's advice) was the person, who for purely selfish ends (to get money) wrote the wheedling letter and made the insincere professions, which moved the Duke of Norfolk to advise the Squire to approach his boy with conciliatory overtures.

Three weeks after the fruitless negotiation, dating from

Cooke's Hotel (though I have but little doubt that he and Harriett were living in Pimlico, within a stone's-throw of Maimuna's drawing-room windows), Shelley, in mid-June, asked Mr. Medwin to be his legal adviser, in respect to the difficulties he would encounter on coming of age. 'I know,' he wrote to the Horsham Lawyer, 'that I am heir to large property. Now, are the papers to be seen? Have you the least doubt that I am the sole heir to a large landed property? Have you any certain knowledge on the subject?'

In spite of the decisiveness of the words, 'I know that I am the heir to large property,' it is obvious, from the ensuing words, that, as his twenty-first year neared its end, the poet realized vividly how small his knowledge was of the nature and magnitude of the patrimony, about which he had written and spoken so much, with equal looseness and boastfulness. He begs his lawyer to say whether he has any doubt that he is the heir to a large landed property. 'Have you,' he asks of the man of business, who was his relative, and had formerly been in some degree cognizant of the affairs of the Shelleys, though he may never have been greatly in the confidence of either Sir Bysshe or Sir Bysshe's son, 'Have you any certain knowledge on the subject?' He would not have asked in this nervous style for his attorney's 'certain knowledge on the subject,' had he not been himself painfully in want of such knowledge. Seventeen months since, he had written confidently to William Godwin, 'I am heir by entail to an estate of 6000*l.* per annum ;' and now in mid-June, 1813, he is writing almost with the excitement of panic to the Horsham lawyer, 'Have you any certain knowledge on the subject?' It seems as though the nervous creature were possessed by a fear that he might, after all his fine talk, find himself heir to nothing,—the fool of a fool's paradise,—the dupe of a long, delightful, golden dream, passing away quickly in the chilling dawn of penury. Of course, any such state of alarm was transient. He had sufficient grounds for believing himself the heir (somehow or other) to considerable property. At the same time, he was painfully alive to his need of precise information respecting the property.

Four or five days later (21st June, 1813), after receiving a letter of reassuring information from Mr. Medwin, he wrote to the lawyer, 'Depend upon it, that no artifice of my father's

shall induce me to take a life-interest in the estate ;'—words, seeming to indicate that the lawyer (who had lent him money, and was otherwise interested in encouraging him to surrender nothing of his estate) had already been instructing him to disappoint his grandfather's and father's design to compass the re-entailment of the property. 'I feel with sufficient force,' the writer continues, in respect to the proposal that he should take a life-interest in the estate, 'that I should not by such conduct be guilty alone of injustice to myself, but to those who have assisted me by kind offices and advice during my adversity :'—*i.e.* those who had lent him money during his minority.

Six days after the date of this last-mentioned letter, Harriett gave birth to her first-born child, who was named Ianthe Eliza, the second of the two names indicating that Miss Westbrook continued to hold her sister's affection, and to have an influence in her brother-in-law's home, after he had come to regard her with a dislike, that developed rapidly into unqualified aversion. That Hogg was right in thinking the child was born in Pimlico, instead of Dover Street, I have little doubt, though immediately before and after the birth Shelley was dating letters from Cooke's Hotel.

The question has been raised whether Shelley ever felt any strong affection for Harriett's daughter, though he spoke and wrote passionately of the barbarous decree of the Court of Chancery, that declared him unfit to have any part in the child's education. It has also been questioned whether Harriett ever delighted in the little girl, who suffered from a congenital defect of one of her eyes, that was at least in some degree removed by the surgical operation, which afforded Mrs. Shelley an opportunity of displaying her self-control or insensibility, less to the admiration than to the astonishment of the surgeon who, after vainly endeavouring to persuade her to be absent whilst the patient was under the knife, was surprised at the apparent indifference with which she heard the cries and regarded the sufferings of the infant. It would, however, be unjust to draw conclusions unfavourable to Harriett from her demeanour on this occasion ; for she may have been moved by maternal solicitude to remain in the room during the operation, and having decided to remain there, she was bound by care for her child's welfare and the surgeon's convenience, to keep her feelings under command. Nor should any positive inference to

Harriett's disadvantage be drawn from the fact, that, instead of being suckled by her mother, little Ianthe took her first nourishment from a wet-nurse; for though her *accouchement* was an easy affair, from which she recovered quickly, Harriett may have been compelled to employ a nurse to discharge a duty, which she would have been only too glad to perform personally. Again, though Hogg attributed the weakness to her shame at knowing 'that one so nearly connected with herself was not perfectly beautiful,' Harriett's sensitiveness in respect to her infant's slight facial deformity,—a sensitiveness that caused her to shrink from showing the child even to so intimate a friend as her husband's future biographer, may have originated in maternal tenderness, quite as much as in wounded maternal vanity. Still, though no one of them would warrant an unhesitating inference to her disadvantage, and all of them are susceptible of explanation that would relieve her maternal character of the imputation resulting from them, it must be admitted that the morbid sensitiveness, the employment of the wet-nurse, and the extraordinary self-possession or apathy during the operation, are three facts, to justify a suspicion that the young mother was deficient in parental tenderness.

But to prove that her nature was defective in this respect, would raise no presumption that she was characterized by similar coldness towards her husband. The presumption would, indeed, be in the contrary direction; for instances are afforded at every turn to the social observer, of women who, whilst cold to their offspring, are passionately devoted to their husbands. There is no evidence that Harriett ever evinced any extraordinary devotion to her husband, or any love of him surpassing a girl's ordinary liking for a youthful husband. Having regard to all the circumstances of her married life,—circumstances peculiarly unfavourable to the development of the domestic affections,—most readers of this page will concur with me in holding, that it would have been very strange, had Harriett loved her husband in the highest conceivable degree, or indeed with any fervour surpassing the warmth of ordinary conjugal attachment. Still, in justice to her, it should be borne in mind that a young woman may be at the same time a coldly amiable mother and a passionately loving wife.

It would be more important to ascertain, in what degree Shelley was animated by parental affectionateness. On this

point the authorities are in conflict. Whilst Hogg thought his friend singularly wanting in parental tenderness and emotionality, so far as Ianthe was concerned, Peacock declares Shelley to have been 'extremely fond' of Ianthe when she was an infant-in-arms. To put implicit confidence in Hogg is to believe that Ianthe's arrival neither 'afforded' her father 'any gratification,' nor 'created an interest' in him. Never *speaking* to Hogg of the infant, Shelley never *wrote* to him about her, except in the single letter, dated from Bracknell on 16th March, 1814, where he rails against his sister-in-law as 'a blind and loathsome worm,' even as he had formerly in an epistle to the same correspondent railed against the Brown Demon, who, after being worshipt by him for her angelic excellencies, became in a few months 'the hermaphroditical beast of a woman.'

On the other hand, in support of his opinion that Shelley was 'extremely fond' of Ianthe, Peacock tells how the father 'would walk up and down a room with it in his arms for a long time together, singing to it a monotonous melody of his own making.' Peacock says further, 'His song was, *Yáhmani, Yáhmani, Yáhmani!* It did not please me; but, what was more important, it pleased the child, and lulled it when it was fretful. Shelley was extremely fond of his children. He was pre-eminently an affectionate father.' To most readers Peacock's example of the poet's parental tenderness will fail to prove the large allegation that he 'was pre-eminently an affectionate father.' Ordinary humanity and selfishness will account for the pains he took to lull the child, as he could not fly to Maimuna's, drawing-room whenever it raised its sharp, wailing cry. To do what Shelley did, is only to do what is done by almost every young father who, with a babe in his home, has not a good nursery at a convenient distance from the room he inhabits, but must perforce endure its screams or make it leave off screaming.

Fortunately there is another witness to be called, who is in some respects a better witness than either Peacock or Hogg; for, on making his observations, he had come to a period of life entitling him to be credited with more discretion than either of them possessed in 1813. Moreover, in 1822, when, Trelawny knew the poet, Shelley had arrived at a period of life when parental love is invariably stronger than at manhood's threshold, and in burying his eldest boy by Mary Godwin, had made

acquaintance with the sorrow that never fails to quicken the sufferer's disposition to love his offspring. On the other hand, it must be admitted, somewhat to his discredit, that this witness opens his evidence with a most erroneous statement. A clever man of the world, and a shrewd student of character, Trelawny came to a confident opinion that Shelley was not the 'pre-eminently affectionate father' Peacock declares him. Trelawny's testimony to this point is weakened by the fact that he prefaced it with a declaration which no student of the poet's story will hesitate to reject as wrong. On 22nd April, 1872, towards the close of his career, Trelawny reiterated to Mr. Rossetti an opinion, which he had expressed on previous occasions, 'that Shelley cared nothing for children;' and in illustration of the poet's comparative indifference for his own child, told how in his presence 'Shelley stepped over his own child, Percy, near the threshold of the house, without observing that it was Percy until the nurse told him.' On this occasion, to Trelawny's jocular reference to the proverbial saying that a man must be wise to know his own children, the poet remarked, 'A wise man wouldn't have any.'

In saying that Shelley cared nothing for children, Trelawny, of course, made a mistake, showing how little the shrewd man of the world knew of the poet; a mistake to be regarded as a rash inference from insufficient data. To remember how Shelley fed the little girl with bread-and-milk at Oxford; to remember how the troop of nakedized children rushed downstairs on hearing his rap at the street-door; to remember how he nursed Allegra in her infancy, rolled the billiard-balls about the table with her at Venice, and raced at her heels along the passages of the Bagna Cavallo convent; to remember all the pleasant stories of his intercourse with little people, is to remember how he resembled Byron in liking to make playmates of children. But, though Shelley certainly cared enough for children to enjoy their prattle, it does not follow that Trelawny (an honest and unimaginary man) is otherwise than a good witness to facts which took place under his eyes. Wrong in the mere matter of opinion, he holds the confidence of his hearers when he speaks to facts. Few readers will hesitate in accepting the Cornish gentleman's evidence that he saw Shelley step over his little boy, and could remember Shelley did not recognize the minute urchin till the nurse spoke to him. The man, who, on

stumbling over the infant, failed to recognize his own two-years-old child (a child ever about the house; a child with whom he had played for hours together in the previous year) cannot have been a father, in whom parental instinct was strongly operative. Such a man may be a conscientious and beneficent parent, but it is impossible for him to be a pre-eminently affectionate father to his children during their tender infancy. To enjoy playing with children is not the same thing as to love them. A kindly man will soothe them when they are fretful, and yet feel for them no sort of tenderness that is akin to parental affection. That Peacock inferred too much from Shelley's practice of nursing and lulling Ianthe, appears from the fact that at Marlow he acted in the same way to Allegra.

To say that parental affection was not powerful in Shelley is not to raise a question respecting his general elevation of character, for the mere strength and activity of the parental sentiment afford no data for estimating the degree in which a man is endowed with the higher virtues. The mean and selfish often delight in their children, and on the other hand the humane and lofty-natured are sometimes by no means remarkable for solicitude for their own offspring. Why then am I at so much pains to call attention to the evidence that Shelley was not strongly interested in his first-born child, and that in this particular Harriett resembled him? In order that, whilst considering the circumstances which resulted in the poet's separation from his wife, the reader may remember there is no reason for thinking the youthful couple were strongly influenced by the affection, that so often draws a husband and wife into stronger sympathy, and sometimes counteracts the forces that, but for it, would drive them asunder.

It was probably before Harriett's accouchement, and whilst her physical condition, without disposing her to keep indoors, rendered bodily exercise more and more trying to her, that Shelley gave his wife the carriage which afforded Hogg the materials for one of his drollest anecdotes. How the carriage was horsed, and in what way the occupant of lodgings procured the servants needful for putting the vehicle on the London pavement, does not appear. Probably the requisite men and animals were provided on credit by the keeper of the livery-yard where the carriage was housed. It is, however, certain that, instead of being 'jobbed,' the vehicle was bought by Shelley of a

coach-maker, who had not parted with the coach many weeks when he sued his customer for its price, one of the consequences of the tradesman's efforts to get his money being that Hogg, through the blundering of a brace of bailiffs, was momentarily arrested on the writ issued for his friend's apprehension. The coach-builder's action shows clearly that, in selling the carriage to Shelley, he imagined himself selling it to a customer of legal age. It does not, however, follow that Shelley made any misstatement of his years in order to get possession of the vehicle. On buying the carriage, it was, of course, incumbent on him to let the tradesman know he was dealing with a minor; and it is conceivable that Shelley either spoke to the man in terms which should have enlightened him on this point, or had reason for believing the tradesman knew him to be under age. Had Shelley been heir to an estate, into the actual possession of which he would come a few months later, the purchase of the coach would have been no act of egregious imprudence, but as the estate to which he might eventually succeed would not come to him till the death of his father, the poet's action in setting up his carriage, when he was deeply in debt, and had no income apart from the precarious 400*l.*, may be fairly called a droll extravagance.

9.—BRACKNELL.

Under the circumstances, no reader will suspect Lady Shelley of wanting evidence to support her statement that, in the summer of 1813, 'Shelley was in severe pecuniary distress.' However successful they may be in getting credit and staving off their creditors, people who live showily on just nothing a-year are usually in severe pecuniary distress. What with the cost of producing 250 copies of *Queen Mab* on fine paper, the cost of lodgings in so fashionable a thoroughfare as Half-Moon Street, the expenses of Harriett's carriage, the fees to the taciturn Quaker physician who attended her, and now the wages of Ianthe's wet-nurse, Shelley certainly lived in London from April to mid-July as extravagantly as he had lived at Tanyrallt. It is, therefore, conceivable that, before 'going out of town,' Shelley often found himself sorely in want of a five-pound note, a sovereign, ay, even of half-a-crown.

Conceivable also is it that Shelley imagined he could retrench his expenses at Bracknell, and that therefore Lady Shelley may be in possession of documentary evidence that he

spoke of his migration to Bracknell as an economical movement. But writing 'from authentic sources' of information, Lady Shelley can scarcely have been justified in writing of her husband's father that, 'for the purpose of economy, he retired to a small cottage in Berkshire,' as though he went to Bracknell solely for cheap rural existence. Shelley went to Bracknell in order to be near Maimuna, who had her country-house there. Lady Shelley, with her 'authentic sources,' cannot have been unaware that the youthful poet moved to Bracknell for the enjoyment of gentle and soothing intercourse with Maimuna. It is inconceivable that Lady Shelley never heard of Maimuna, her home at Bracknell, and Shelley's passion for her. Yet she represents that Shelley's motive for going to Bracknell was purely economical. There is no reference to Maimuna in the whole of Lady Shelley's book. It is thus that Shelley's extravagant admirers produce biography of him from 'authentic sources.'

Taking a cottage at Bracknell, in order to be near Mrs. Boinville, Shelley, during his tenure of the 'High Elms,' lived in a way that, instead of being economical, might almost be styled prodigal. He made a costly trip to Edinburgh and the English lakes, posting in his carriage. He was frequently running from the Berkshire parish up to town, journeying sometimes on foot, but necessarily spending money or running deeper into debt for accommodation at London hotels. At least, on one occasion, he had seven guests staying with him in his Berkshire cottage at the same time, the whole family of the vegetarian Newtons. It is true that Shelley at this period of his career was a vegetarian, and abstained from wine and all spirits, except the spirit that came to him through the neck of the laudanum-bottle; but at times during this term he drank laudanum freely, and laudanum, bought of West-London druggists, is no cheap drink. There was not much economy in this way of living.

There is a conflict between the authorities as to the particular year in which Shelley paid his last visit to Field Place; for whilst Hogg represents the visit to have been made in the early summer of 1814, Lady Shelley is no less certain that it was an affair of the late summer of 1813. Though with all his inaccuracy Hogg is much less inaccurate than Lady Shelley, several circumstances cause me to think the lady right on this

point, albeit two or three matters dispose me to think she may have been mistaken. The balance of the evidence is, however, so greatly in her favour that (whilst cautioning readers that they may even yet be required to postpone the visit into the following year) I venture to record that, soon after migrating to Bracknell, Shelley started from his cottage on foot for his old home, whither his mother had invited him to come in the absence of his father and the three younger children.

At Field Place the poet was received cordially by his mother and two eldest sisters, and had the society of Mr. Kennedy, a young officer (*ætat.* 16) stationed at Horsham, to whose pen we are indebted for the greater part of what is known of Bysshe's last visit to his former home. From this chronicler it appears that Bysshe accepted his mother's invitation on the understanding that his father and the younger children would be away, and that his visit would be withheld from the Squire's knowledge. There are, however, grounds for suspecting that the Squire on leaving his home for a few days was aware who would visit it in his absence, though Shelley came to Field Place under the impression that, to shield his mother from the wrath that would visit her in case of discovery, he must take care to keep his presence at the house from the cognizance of neighbours.

Some thirty or more years later Captain Kennedy recalled how, before setting out for a walk beyond the limits of the Field Place demesne, he (a sixteen-years-old ensign) and the poet used to exchange their outer garments, so that the disguise of a scarlet uniform should render the Warnham peasants less likely to recognize their Squire's son. It lived in Captain Kennedy's recollection how, though he had a small pate, his military cap was so much too large for Percy that it was found needful to pad the lining liberally for his use. But because Shelley saw a necessity for dressing himself out in this fashion, and, doubtless, enjoyed the fun of masquerading about the Warnham lanes in a red coat, it does not follow there was any need for the disguise. That Captain Kennedy resembled the biographer for whose benefit he racked his recollection, and all other persons who try to recall clearly what they can only remember vaguely, in permitting his fancy to aid his memory, appears from one or two passages of his entertaining narrative. Though the exchange of costumes was a matter to live in the memory of either masquerader, it is difficult to believe the

Captain could recollect (some thirty or forty years afterwards) that Shelley wore 'an old black coat,' which had been 'done up, and smartened with metal buttons and a velvet collar.' To believe all the Captain says about this seedy and re-trimmed garment, is to believe that Shelley (the young gentleman who a few weeks since had set up his carriage) dressed thus meanly because he was too generous ever to have any money in his pocket, and too precisely honourable to run in debt.

A passage from the Captain's narrative, as it was originally offered to the world in Hogg's second volume, may be given both as an example of the deponent's evidence, and as an illustration of the editorial carelessness by which Hogg enabled his enemies to charge him with falsifying documents:—

'He told me,' says Captain Kennedy, 'Sir James was intimate with one to whom, as he said, he owed everything; from whose book, *Political Justice*, he had derived all that was valuable in knowledge and virtue. He discoursed with eloquence and enthusiasm, but his views seemed to me exquisitely metaphysical, and by no means clear, precise, or decided. He told me he had already read the Bible in Hebrew four times. He was then only twenty-two years of age. *Shelley never learnt Hebrew; he probably said in Greek, for he was much addicted to reading the Septuagint.* He spoke of the Supreme Being as of infinite mercy and benevolence. He disclosed no fixed views of spiritual things; all seemed wild and fanciful.'

Observe the words of the extract which I have printed in italics. To any careful peruser of those words and their context, it is obvious that the words, though printed as a substantial part of the Captain's narrative, were not penned by him. The words 'twenty-two years of age,' that immediately precede them, and the words 'He spoke of the Supreme Being,' that follow them immediately, are words of the Captain's writing. But he cannot be imagined to have written the words, '*Shelley never learnt Hebrew; he probably said in Greek, for he was much addicted to reading the Septuagint.*' The interpolation is one of Hogg's editorial notes, which he intended to be printed between brackets and duly 'initialed.' Printed thus, '(Shelley never learnt Hebrew; he probably said in Greek, for he was much addicted to reading the Septuagint. T. J. H.)' the interpolation could not have been maliciously declared a falsification of the text.

When Lady Shelley, after staying Hogg's work midway

and discharging him with public discourtesy, produced her not invariably accurate *Shelley Memorials*, she reproduced Hogg's portions of Captain Kennedy's narrative with alterations in amendment, omitting (as she surely had a right to do) Hogg's editorial interpolation; omitting Captain Kennedy's words 'in Hebrew' (which she surely had no right to do without stating she had the Captain's authority for doing so), and changing 'twenty-two years old' into 'twenty years' (an alteration she would have been fully justified in making on the strength of sufficient documentary evidence without consulting Captain Kennedy on the point). One point more in respect to Captain Kennedy's narrative. As Shelley had no sure belief in the existence of the Supreme Deity at this period of his existence, it must be concluded either that he did not speak of the Supreme Being's infinite mercy and benevolence in the manner alleged by Captain Kennedy, or that he, in so speaking, was insincere.

In connection with Shelley's last visit to his home a few words may be here said more appropriately than they would have been said in a previous chapter. In the letter written by Shelley on 26th November, 1811, from Keswick to Mr. Medwin, Sen., appear these words:—

'Whitton has written to me to state the impropriety of my letter to my mother and sister; this letter I have returned with a passing remark on the back of it. I find that the affair on which those letters spoke is become the general gossip of the idle newsmongers of Horsham—they give me credit for having invented it. They do my invention much honour, but greatly discredit their own penetration.'

From these words it is obvious that Shelley, before 26th November, 1811, had written to his mother and sister a letter that appeared to his father an epistle, to be answered by the family solicitor, Mr. Whitton. It is also obvious that the letter, so answered by the family solicitor, and the letter written in reply to it by the same solicitor, related to some affair which, on coming to the knowledge of certain persons of Horsham, had caused them to declare it no true affair, but a thing invented by Shelley. Apart from this information respecting the affair which Horsham people declared a falsehood, I know nothing, except that Medwin (*vide Life*, p. 169, 170) speaks of it thus:—

'The affair here referred to is little to the purpose; but during Sir Timothy's absence in London, on his parliamentary duties, Lady Shelley

invited Shelley to Field Place, where he was received, to use his own words, with much *shew-affection*. Some days after he had been there his mother produced a parchment deed which she asked him to sign, to what purport I know not; but he declined so doing, and which he told me he would have signed had he not seen through the false varnish of hypocritical caresses. This anecdote is not idle gossip, but comes from Shelley himself.'

If Shelley had the folly in or before his twentieth year to write or say that, when only just nineteen years old or younger, he was at a private conference between them entreated by his mother to sign a legal instrument, which she then and there produced for him to sign, the Horsham gossip-mongers on coming to hear the story may well have burst out laughing and declared it an invention. But till I have better evidence to the point than this statement by Medwin, I must decline to believe that his note describes accurately 'the affair,' which occasioned the exchange of letters, though I am quite prepared to find that the correspondence referred to some cock-and-bull story. I cannot, however, refuse to believe that Shelley, on being spoken to about the passage of the Keswick letter, did really give the explanation which Medwin declares he received from Shelley himself. Medwin's inexactness is proverbial. He is almost as inaccurate as Lady Shelley. But none of his inaccuracies, nor all of them taken together, raise suspicion of his good faith. He was gullible and at times curiously addle-pated; but he was no inventor of untruths. When the errors of his book about Byron raised an outcry, he could produce note-books to show he was an honest collector of gossip, though a credulous and undiscerning one. The wild fictions of the *Conversations* were not Medwinian falsehoods, but pure Byronic 'bams.' Distrustful though I am of Medwin's statements, I have no mistrust of his honour. When he gives me his word of honour that a certain statement was made to him, I neither doubt that some such statement was made, nor doubt that he reports honestly, though with a greater or less degree of inexactness. I do not question that Shelley spoke to him about the affair, and the passage of the Keswick letter; and I am disposed to think that, on being questioned about the passage of the epistle, Shelley may have imagined it to refer, and said that it referred, to some vaguely remembered matter, which instead of taking place in 1811 was an incident of his last visit to Field Place in 1813.

Be it remembered that two distant cousins and close companions have several points of mental resemblance; one of them being the inexactitude that renders Medwin's volumes so comparatively worthless, and Shelley's soberest statements about his personal story so unreliable. It is conceivable that what Shelley said about his mother's endeavour to lure him into signing a parchment-deed, was his vague and inexact recollection of some incident of his last visit to the old home. Of course, it is not to be imagined she produced a legal instrument and asked him to put his signature forthwith to the writing. But it is conceivable that, feeling with her husband on the question of entailing the estate, and knowing the purport of the memorable October, 1811, codicil of Sir Bysshe's will (which would require her son to join in the entailment of the estates A and B on pain of forfeiting all interest in his grandsire's much larger possessions) she undertook to use her influence to win from him a written promise, that he would in due course join in the arrangement, which was desired by his parents even more for his sake than for the sake of 'the family.' What more natural than for the lady to say to her husband, 'Leave me to deal with Bysshe, and I will do my best to persuade him to act rightly'?

In the autumn following this last visit to Field Place (if Lady Shelley is right in assigning the visit to the summer of 1813, which I think her to be), or the autumn preceding the same visit (if Hogg is right in ascribing the visit to the early summer of 1814), Shelley,—moving about for the sake of change, and also perhaps because domestic considerations made him feel it would be well for him to pass a few weeks at a distance from Maimuna's abode,—made the already mentioned trip to Scotland and the Cumberland lakes, with his wife, Miss Westbrook, and Thomas Love Peacock. At Edinburgh on 21st October, 1813, the tourists were still there on 26th November, 1813, when Shelley wrote Hogg a letter containing six superlatively noteworthy words in this otherwise noteworthy sentence:

'I am happy to hear that you have returned to London, as I shall shortly have the pleasure of seeing you again. *I shall return to London alone.* My evenings will often be spent at the N's, where, I presume, you are no unfrequent visitor.'

Though no critic has hitherto called attention to the general inaccuracy of her misleading book, Lady Shelley had scarcely published her *Shelley Memorials: From Authentic Sources*, when

she was assailed with unusual severity for the utter wrongness of a particular statement which, had it not been for the context, would have deserved no reprehension. On coming to speak of Shelley's severance from Harriett, Lady Shelley gives these words in a separate paragraph:—

'Towards the close of 1813 estrangements, which for some time had been slowly growing between Mr. and Mrs. Shelley, came to a crisis. Separation ensued; and Mrs. Shelley returned to her father's house. Here she gave birth to her second child—a son, who died in 1826.'

Had Mr. Peacock objected to this curious specimen of close writing that, by omitting all reference to the graver estrangements of the earlier months of 1814, Lady Shelley gave her readers the erroneous impression that the estrangements and crisis of 1813 were the immediate and only cause of the separation that took place towards the middle of the ensuing year, he would have had the general concurrence of discreet and critical readers of the Shelleyan story. But Peacock contended that no estrangements had occurred in 1813 between Shelley and Harriett, and that therefore no estrangements between them could have come to a crisis towards the close of that year. 'Thus,' says Mr. Peacock, 'there had been no estrangement to the end of 1812. My own memory sufficiently attests that there was none in 1813,'—strong and notable language from the eminent man of letters, who, accompanying the Shelleys to the Cumberland lakes, Edinburgh, and other places (including Matlock), in October and November, was their close companion till the end of the year; very notable language from the man who was the daily companion of the youthful husband and wife in the northern capital, whence Shelley dated the letter to Hogg containing those six words, 'I shall return to London alone.'

To apprehend the significance of these six words, readers must remember that in 1813 a journey to Edinburgh was a more laborious and costly affair than a trip to Rome in these days of punctual steamers and fast trains. If a party of four persons,—a young husband with his young wife, sister-in-law, and a male friend,—should start now-a-days from London for a trip to Rome, with the intention of staying there six weeks, and before the expiration of the time the young husband (being no man of affairs, likely to call him suddenly back to England) should write to a familiar friend in London, 'I shall shortly

have the pleasure of seeing you again. I shall return to London alone,' what inference would the receiver of the epistle naturally draw from so startling an announcement? Surely he would conclude that there was discord in the party, that 'something had gone wrong,' and that the disagreement affected the young wife's relations with her husband, who had resolved to return to England by himself, leaving her to follow him.

On reviewing the chief features of the poet's life at Bracknell in the summer and early autumn, no reader can question that they indicated on Shelley's part discontent with his home, and on Harriett's part more or less annoyance at finding herself an insufficient companion for him. In her rural retirement she had even less of his society than when they were in London. Most of the time spent by him at home he spent with a book or pen in hand. As soon as he had done reading and writing, he took his hat and went for a solitary walk that, wherever else his path led him, never failed to take him to Maimuna's house standing at a considerable distance from Harriett's cottage:—to the house of the woman whom he regarded and declared 'the most admirable specimen of a human being he had ever seen.' Going daily to Mrs. Boinville's house, he spent hours at a time with her, reading poetry and philosophy with her, communing with her on fine questions touching the perfectibility of the human species, and still more delicate questions about the source, nature, and activity of the emotional energies, — conversations that afforded him daily opportunities, for studying 'the extreme subtlety and delicacy of Mrs. Boinville's understanding and affections.' If he went to her house in the evening it was no uncommon thing for him to stay with her and her friends, talking and drinking strong tea till long after midnight, and to re-enter his cottage at dawn. Consulting Maimuna on the affairs of his highest intellectual interests, he consulted her also on his divers domestic anxieties and mere matters of the house. Is it conceivable that Harriett liked all this?

In her annoyance at Percy's devotion to his spiritual bride, the whiteness of Maimuna's tresses afforded Harriett little comfort. To the young wife it was a poor consolation to reflect that the enchantress was old enough to be Percy's mother, that he valued her chiefly for the subtlety of her intellect and the delicacy of her affections, that he worshiped her platonically. Of given forces, acting under certain conditions, the scientist can

predict the consequences with unerring precision. The chemist does not require evidence of what ensued from the combination of particular elements in stated proportions. In like manner the competent personal historian knows what must have resulted from certain positions. Without direct documentary evidence to their existence, Lady Shelley would have been justified in saying that towards the close of 1813 'estrangements had been slowly growing between Mr. and Mrs. Shelley,' and that the estrangements came at that time to a crisis. But she had documentary evidence for both assertions. Towards the close of 1813 Shelley wrote those six words to Hogg, 'I shall return to London alone.'

If Peacock knew nothing of these dissensions, it only shows that Shelley and Harriett had the good taste and discretion to keep their discord from his cognizance. It is, however, conceivable that he was aware of the Edinburgh dissensions, without regarding them of sufficient magnitude to be termed estrangements. A subsequent passage of his second Shelleyan paper indicates that this was the case. There are, of course, estrangements and estrangements; and it is usual for conjugal estrangements to have several crises before coming to the extreme crisis—of separation. An estrangement may be nothing more than a serious quarrel, which, though 'made up,' results in a weakening of mutual affection; it may be a more or less complete alienation of affection, unattended with personal severance, or even any wish for personal severance; it may be such a state of discord as quickly results in personal severance; it may be the total cessation of all intercourse. Peacock was obviously thinking of one or the other of the two most aggravated kinds of estrangement when he wrote, 'There was no estrangement; no shadow of a thought of separation, till Shelley became acquainted, not long after the second marriage, with the lady who was subsequently his second wife.' Peacock may have been right in this opinion, and certainly had fairly good grounds for it, though I question whether they were sufficient. But if he, using the word in one of its extreme senses, was justified in holding his opinion, it would still remain that Lady Shelley, using the word in one of the less vehement senses, was justified in speaking of the estrangements, which came to a crisis before the end of 1813. But even so, Lady Shelley was wrong in writing so as to lead her readers to infer that the crisis

of 1813 was the direct and immediate cause of the separation of 1814.

One of the noteworthy facts connected with Shelley's journey in the autumn of 1813 to the Cumberland lakes, and Edinburgh, is that he made the trip in his own carriage drawn by post horses,—the costliest way of travelling seventy years since. In London he could get horses from a livery-stable on credit; but for post-horses taken for the stage, 'the immediate heir to one of the first fortunes of England' must have paid at once. As Peacock was at that time a poor man of letters he cannot be supposed to have contributed anything towards the cost of the journey, though he possibly paid his own hotel-bills. The charges of the trip must have fallen chiefly, if not altogether, on Shelley,—the young gentleman who, at this term of his career, is represented as wearing furbished-up clothes, because he could not afford to buy new ones. Mr. Medwin, of Horsham, could probably have told how his youthful client obtained the money that enabled him to execute this feat of prodigality.

Before the present narrative deals with incidents of 1814 notice should be taken of a trivial literary performance, and a piece of important literary labour, that pertain to the record of the year in which the poet attained his majority. Reprinting the Vegetarian Note to *Queen Mab*, with a few alterations and additions of no moment, he published it in the form of a tract that was offered for sale by a medical bookseller at eighteen pence a copy; the date of publication being subsequent to the secret issue of the poem. To the later months of the same year may also be attributed the labour of writing the *Refutation of Deism*, which is believed to have been published (at least in the legal sense of the term) at the beginning of 1814,—the year given on the title-page.

CHAPTER VIII.

FROM THE OLD TO THE NEW LOVE.

Shelley's Refusal to join in the Resettlement of A and B—His Places of Residence in Two Years and Eight Months—*A Refutation of Deism*—Mr. Kegan Paul's Inaccuracies—Discord between Shelley and Harriett—Their Remarriage—Miss Westbrook's Withdrawal—Shelley's Desertion of Harriett—The Desertion closes in Separation by mutual Agreement—'Do what other women do!'—Causes of the Separation—How Shelley's Evidence touching them should be regarded—Peacock's Testimony for Harriett—Shelley in Skinner Street—'The Mask of Scorn'—Mary Godwin *not* bred up to mate in Free Contract—Old St. Pancras Church—At Mary Wollstonecraft's Grave—Claire's Part in the Wooing—Excuses for Mary Godwin—The Elopement from Skinner Street—From London to Dover—From Dover to Calais—A 'Scene' at Calais—The Joint Journal—Mrs. Shelley convicted of Tampering with Evidence—The Six Weeks' Tour—Shelley begs Harriett to come to him in Switzerland—Byron's Hunger for Evil Fame—Shelley's Self-Approbation and Self-Righteousness—Godwin's Wrath with Shelley—Their subsequent Relations—Shelley's Renewal of Intercourse with Harriett—Tiffs and Disagreements between Claire and Mary—Claire's Incapacity for Friendship—She wants more than Friendship from Shelley.

On coming of age, Shelley was pressed to join in the resettlement of the estates A and B, in accordance with the directions of his grandfather's will and codicil. Instead of yielding to this pressure, he firmly refused to join in the arrangement on which his father and grandfather were set; and by so refusing he forfeited for himself and issue all the interest assigned to him and them, in the far larger property, by the will. The choice was given to him to elect between surrendering the estate secured to him by existing settlements, and taking in lieu thereof the position and interest appointed to him by his grandfather's will in the greater estate, or retaining his interest in A and B, and foregoing participation alike for himself and issue in C. Shelley deliberately elected to hold what was already secured to him, and to forego all interest under his grandfather's will. On 21st June, 1813, he wrote to Mr. Medwin, Senr., in his own perverse way about what was his *grandfather's* arrangement: 'Depend

upon it, that no artifice of my *father's* shall induce me to take a life-interest in the estate ;' and he held to this resolution. By being as good as his word on this matter, he may be said to have disinherited himself and his issue out of the very large entailed estate, created by his grandfather's wealth. Religious sentiment and political opinion had nothing whatever to do with the arrangement in which he refused to concur. There must be an end to the romantic notion that the poet was disinherited, or in some way extruded from his boyhood's home and proper place in his family, by the merciless elders of his house, at the instigation of religious bigotry and political resentment.

Shelley's refusal to concur in the arrangement could be more easily accounted for, if there were evidence before the world that his grandfather and father required him to take a mere life-interest in lieu of his larger interest in A and B, and during their lives to rely wholly on their generosity for an income, sufficient for his necessities and the payment of the considerable debts contracted by him during his minority, —debts for which he was responsible in honour, though not in law. But whilst there is no evidence before the world that the sire and grandsire made any such requirement, there exists considerable (though by no means conclusive) evidence that by acceding to the wishes of his domestic elders in respect to the resettlement of A and B, he would have a large assured income during their lives:—even (according to one account) so large an income as 2000*l.* a-year, which would certainly have been sufficient for his current necessities and the payment of his creditors. One would like to know more of the negotiations between the young man and his elders, that resulted in his final refusal to re-settle A and B, notwithstanding the purport of the momentous codicil. Field Place, doubtless, could impart the desired knowledge ; but Field Place is not likely to throw fuller light on the romantic inaccuracies of Lady Shelley's *Shelley Memorials*.

My impression is that Mr. Medwin, the elder, was mainly accountable for the action by which Shelley put himself outside his original domestic circle, and closed the doors of his 'boyhood's home' against himself for ever. The solicitor, who undertook in the summer of 1813 to see his young friend 'through his difficulties,' had reasons of self-interest, and also

of resentment, for drawing him into deeper difficulty. He had lent him money, and saw it would be more to his advantage to have for his client the tenant in tail male of A and B in remainder expectant, than to have for his client a young man with nothing but a contingent life-interest in an estate to which he might never succeed. At the same time, the Horsham solicitor participated in his youthful client's animosity against the Squire of Field Place, who had on a recent occasion treated him with insolence, if not with personal violence. The evidence is clear that the lawyer encouraged his youthful client to oppose his father and grandfather; and like most wilful men, Shelley was ever easily managed by the person to whom he gave his confidence for the moment. The lawyer's influence and his youthful client's antagonism to the elders of his House are sufficient to account for Shelley's firmness in 'holding his own' at a great sacrifice; but the evidences are still wanting for a perfect account of the motives which made him disinherit himself and his issue out of the bulk of the family property. After taking a course attended with painful consequences, it was like Shelley to call it the course of duty and self-sacrifice. Readers may dismiss with a smile the notion that he declined to resettle A and B *as* C, because his conscience would not permit him to join in an immoral arrangement which, whilst diminishing his own capacity for beneficent action, might put vast power in the hands of a fool or scoundrel. Religious sentiment and political morality had no more to do with Shelley's refusal than with Sir Bysshe's codicil.

Returning from Scotland to London shortly before Christmas, 1813, Shelley, after a brief stay in town, took a furnished house for two or three months at Windsor, whence he migrated in the early spring to Binfield, where he still nominally resided at the time of his withdrawal from his wife. Thus during the two years and nine months of their association in wedlock, Shelley and Harriett stayed for six weeks in (1) Edinburgh, sojourned for awhile at (2) York, tarried for three months at (3) Keswick, lived nine weeks at (4) Dublin, tarried for something over two months at (5) Nantgwillt, spent something more than nine weeks at (6) Lynton, lived for a fortnight or so at (7) Tanyrallt, came for six weeks to (8) London, returned for something like fourteen weeks to (9) Tanyrallt, made a second trip to (10) Dublin, flew off to (11) Killarney, passed a season

in (12) London, tenanted a cottage in (13) Bracknell, revisited (14) the Cumberland lakes and (15) Edinburgh, inhabited a house at (16) Windsor, and dwelt in a cottage at (17) Binfield. To realize their restlessness, the reader must remember that they had two and even three successive places of abode in some of the parishes they visited. Besides hotels which they entered for bed and board in the course of their wanderings, they inhabited some nineteen different houses or sets of lodgings in thirty-three months. What a life of vagabondage! How little calculated was such a way of living to dispose the rambles to seek enjoyment in simple domestic interests! Hogg laughs at Harriett's ignorance of housewifely arts, and her inability even to order the wretched dinners served in her successive lodgings. No wonder that the poor child, who never had a house of her own to keep, was a simpleton at house-keeping!

In 1814 (according to Hogg, at the beginning of the year) Shelley published (in the *legal*, if not in the commercial sense of the term) *A Refutation of Deism: In a Dialogue*.

Had it been Shelley's purpose to give a suitable title to the performance, which in style contrasts so favourably with his earlier prose writings, he would have named it 'A Dialogue for the Fuller Demonstration of the Necessity of Atheism.' But it was his design to give the pamphlet a title, that should throw dust in the eyes of his orthodox enemies, and cause persons to buy the book, who would not wilfully open an atheistical treatise. With the same deceptive purpose he concocted the preface, which opens with these words:—

'The object of the following dialogue is to prove that the system of Deism is untenable. It is attempted to show that there is no alternative between Atheism and Christianity; that the evidences of the Being of a God are to be deduced from no other principles than those of Divine Revelation. The author endeavours to show how much the cause of natural and revealed religion has suffered from the mode of defence adopted by Theosophical Christians. How far he will accomplish what he proposed to himself, in the composition of this dialogue, the world will finally determine.'

In the whole range of English literature, it would be difficult to point to a preface, containing a larger number of misstatements and false suggestions in so few words. The object of the dialogue is to prove that Christianity and Deism are alike untenable. Shelley's aim in the dialogue is to prove that the

evidences of the Being of God can be deduced neither from the principles of Deism, nor from those of the so-styled Christian Revelation, and that, after reviewing the arguments for Christianity and the arguments for Atheism, the logical reader will not hesitate to embrace the latter.

Were it not for his want of a quality so conspicuous in Byron, one would suspect Shelley of grim humour in making the arguments for Atheism proceed from a Christian's mouth. But Eusebes, the Christian of the dialogue, is not so much a Christian as an Atheist disguised as a Christian,—the disguise being one of the mystifications employed by the author to veil his insidious purpose. Whilst the Christian of the dialogue may be described as an Atheist in disguise, Theosophus is less a Deist than a mere derider of Christianity. He urges little in favour of Deism; and that little he utters faintly, in comparison with his arguments against Christianity. For every page of the Deist's arguments in support of Deism, the dialogue affords nearly eight pages to the direct discredit of Christianity. The mystification, that results from the author's adroit handling of his two argumentative puppets, is even more effective than the mystification resulting from the title-page and preface. What the author, with all his boldness, would have hesitated to say in his own person, to the dishonour of the national faith, he felt he could utter with comparative safety through the lips of a Deist, who is thoroughly beaten on the deistical questions by a Christian. On the other hand, the atheistical arguments that could scarcely fail to expose him to prosecution for blasphemy, Shelley thought he could utter with impunity, or at least with smaller risk of legal chastisement, if he uttered them through the mouth of a Christian, who should be represented as offering them to his companion, merely for the sake of purging his mind of deistical trash, and driving him to embrace Christianity.

Theosophus (the derider of Christianity who affects to be a Deist) having done his best to demolish Christianity, Eusebes (the Atheist who affects to be a Christian) directs the fire of his polemical guns against the belief in a supreme Deity; and it is in this later portion of the dialogue that the reader comes upon the most important of the arguments, that are mere developments of the reasonings of *The Necessity of Atheism* and the Atheistical Note to *Queen Mab*.

It has been observed how Shelley reproduced in the *Letter to*

Lord Ellenborough one of the prime doctrines of *The Necessity of Atheism*,—viz., that belief is independent, and beyond the control of volition. Hence, Shelley reproduced the reasoning of *The Necessity of Atheism* in three successive publications, (1) the *Letter to Lord Ellenborough*, (2) *Queen Mab*, (3) the *Refutation of Deism*. Yet Mr. Garnett requires us to believe that in writing *The Necessity of Atheism*, Shelley was merely throwing off a squib, that did not express his serious convictions.

It is needful for the present biographer to call attention to another cluster of inaccuracies in Mr. Kegan Paul's *William Godwin ; his Friends and Contemporaries*, wherein it is written,—

‘In 1813 Shelley was again in London for a short time during the summer, but Mary was absent in Scotland. She was not strong, and as a growing girl needed purer air than Skinner Street could offer; she had therefore gone to Dundee with her father's friends, Mr. Baxter and his daughter; and remained with them for six months. It was not until the summer of 1814 that Shelley and Mary Godwin became really acquainted, when he found the child *whom he had scarcely noticed two years* before had grown into the woman of nearly seventeen summers. . . . Shelley came to London on May 18th, leaving his wife at Binfield, certainly without the least idea that it was to be a final separation from him, though the relations between husband and wife had for some time been increasingly unhappy. He was of course received in Godwin's house on the old footing of close intimacy, and rapidly fell in love with Mary. Fanny Godwin was away from home visiting some of the Wollstonecrafts, or she, three years older than Mary, might have discouraged the romantic attachment which sprang up between her sister and their friend. Jane Clairmont's influence was neither then, nor at any other time, used, or likely to be used, judiciously.’

I have ventured to print certain words of the above extract in italics.

(1) As Mr. Kegan Paul ought to have known that Shelley was in London from an early time of April till after the middle of July, 1813, he should not have written, ‘In 1813 Shelley was again in London for a short time during the summer;’—words implying that the poet was in London *only* for a short time.

(2) Nor should Mr. Kegan Paul have written in continuation of the same sentence, ‘but Mary was absent in Scotland;’—words implying that she was in Scotland during the whole time Shelley was in London, i.e. from about the end of the first week of April, 1813, till after the middle of July, 1813.

(3) Can Mr. Kegan Paul produce any sufficient evidence

that Mary Godwin was in Scotland for a single day of that period? On the 8th June, 1814, the day when Hogg saw her for the first time, in the parlour over her father's shop in Skinner Street, Mary Godwin had recently returned from her sojourn in Scotland, and was wearing 'a frock of tartan, an unusual dress in London at that time.' We have Mr. Kegan Paul's assurance, made on the evidence of the Field Place papers, that Mary Godwin's stay in Scotland was for six months; and there is other evidence that she stayed there for about that time. Mary Godwin was certainly back in London on the 8th June, 1814. Mr. Kegan Paul's words imply that she had returned very much before the 18th May, 1814; but there are grounds for thinking that she did not return much earlier. Let us suppose she returned at the beginning of the month. In that case she went to Scotland, for her six months' visit, at the end of October or the beginning of November 1813, when Shelley was either at or approaching Edinburgh,—more than three months after Shelley's stay in London (from the first week of April to the middle of July, 1813) came to an end.

(4) Shelley returned from Scotland to London shortly before Christmas 1813, and made a brief stay in town. But it will not clear Mr. Kegan Paul from this charge of serious inaccuracy for him to say his printed words refer to this brief visit *at the end of the year*. Mr. Kegan Paul speaks of Shelley's stay in London in the summer of 1813.

(5) As Mary Godwin was in London during the time Shelley lived in Half-Moon Street and Pimlico, and as Shelley saw her during that time, *i.e.* between the end of the first week of April and the middle of July, 1813, Mr. Kegan Paul should not have written, 'It was not until the summer of 1814 that Shelley and Mary Godwin became really acquainted, *when* he found the child whom he had scarcely noticed two years before had grown into the woman of nearly seventeen summers;'—words implying that on seeing Mary Godwin in May, 1814, he had not seen her for two years.

(6) Mr. Kegan Paul should not have written that, two years before seeing her in May, 1814, Shelley had seen Mary Godwin and scarcely noticed the child, for in May, 1812, *Shelley had never set eyes on the child*. At the beginning of May, 1812, five months had still to elapse before Shelley saw Mary for the first time. In May, 1814, he had known her for only one year and seven

months. He cannot from personal observation have regarded Mary as a child, five months before he ever saw her.

(7) Mr. Kegan Paul should not have suggested that, after returning from London to Tanyrallt in November 1812, Shelley had no opportunity of holding personal intercourse with Mary Godwin, till the 18th May, in 1814, when he ought to have known that, during the season of 1813, Shelley was a frequent visitor at the Skinner-Street house.

(8) Mr. Kegan Paul would not have written of Mary Godwin as a 'woman of nearly seventeen summers' in May 1814 when on the 1st morning of that month she was only sixteen years and eight months of age, had he not wished to make her seem as old as possible.

(9) As Mr. Kegan Paul's book affords evidence that Mary and Claire were of about the same age he should not have suggested (what elsewhere in his book he says outright) that Jane Clairmont was considerably Mary's senior, and should therefore be held accountable for her sister's misconduct.

It is needless to say that Shelley's reputation gains nothing from such misrepresentations, which are calculated to make readers suspect that the poet's intercourse with Mary in the spring and summer of 1813 was attended with incidents, creditable to neither of them.

Differences, each of which was fruitful of estrangement, having arisen between them in the later months of 1813, it was not to be expected that Shelley and Harriett would return to their former harmony. Like other husbands and wives who take to bickering, they contended about little things which they magnified into great ones. To Shelley, who had argued himself into believing that all the evils of human nature and society were referable to the diet denounced by vegetarians, it was a serious grievance that his wife enjoyed a mutton-chop and a glass of ale; that instead of being 'slightly animal,' as she was at Tanyrallt, she ridiculed the Newtons and their crotchets, and insisted on eating and drinking like most other young women. It has been suggested that before Shelley ceased to live with her, she sometimes took too much wine, and in other ways displayed a disposition, which a year or two later developed into intemperance. But though her subsequent career accorded with the imputation, readers of this page will decline to attach much weight to a charge, resting wholly on the evidence of

the poet, who, while drinking laudanum with an easy conscience, remembered with remorseful shame that at Oxford he had enjoyed a tumbler of stiff white-wine negus. Differing on questions of diet, Percy and Harriett bickered on other matters. Whilst she resented his devotion to Maimuna, he resented her jealousy of the lady, whom he worshipped for the subtlety and delicacy of her understanding and affections. Ceasing to delight in Harriett's beauty, though he could still speak of her as 'a noble animal,' Shelley ceased to direct the studies of the young woman, who could 'neither feel poetry nor understand philosophy.' On the other hand, there were signs of deterioration of the girlish wife who, desisting from the studies Percy no longer cared to direct, withdrew her attention from books and turned it to bonnets. Turning from authors she could not understand, Harriett gave her mind to millinery. No marvel, that the disagreements grew in number and bitterness; that Miss Westbrook, ever of course on her sister's side, grew hourly more hateful to her brother-in-law; that to escape from the child-wife who irked him, and from the sister-in-law who exasperated him, Shelley withdrew from the furnished house at Richmond, and flying to Maimuna for counsel and consolation, remained under her roof at Bracknell from about the middle of February, 1814, to a day something later than the middle of March, *without his wife*. If Shelley found solace, he missed contentment in the society of the white-haired lady, whose influence over him at this point of his career was no less mischievous than powerful. From Bracknell he wrote to Hogg a letter of despair on 16th March, 1814, having a few days earlier addressed Maimuna in the melancholy verses, 'Thy dewy looks sink in my breast.'

What poison had Maimuna's gentle words stirred in his breast, how had her dewy looks troubled him, that he had lost the repose of despair, and was crushed by the thought of persisting in the path of duty? Readers should re-peruse the verses and letter, in order to get a view of the miserable position of the youthful sentimentalist, whose expiring flame of life had been revived by Maimuna and friends;—the young man who, having found a happy home at a distance from his wife's dwelling, could not endure the thought of returning to Harriett and her child, because he could not return to them without encountering the 'blind loathsome worm' that was ever hanging

about his infant. The letter of despair was dated from Bracknell, on 16th March, 1814. Eight days later,—*only* eight days later; on 24th March, 1814, Shelley re-married Harriett Westbrook in the church of the parish of St. George, Hanover Square. This re-marriage was done by license; the officiating clergyman being Mr. Edward Williams, curate, and the two witnesses being John Westbrook and John Stanley. In the registration of the marriage it is recorded that the parties had been 'already married to each other according to Rites and Ceremonies of the Church of Scotland,' and that the marriage was solemnized on the present occasion, 'in order to obviate all doubts that have arisen, or shall or may arise, touching or concerning the validity of the aforesaid marriage.'

Two different views are taken of this marriage by Shelleyan writers. Whilst Peacock, and the writers who follow him, declare it a sufficient evidence that Shelley was living in harmony with his wife, and can have had no disposition to separate from her so late as 24th March, 1814, it is maintained by other writers, that Shelley's only motive in the marriage was to put the legitimacy of his next child beyond question. Whilst I am certain that error lies with the former set of writers, I cannot concur with the latter. There is no need for the threatened publication of unsavoury particulars about Harriett, to bring readers to the conclusion that Shelley and his wife had ceased to live happily together before the date of their re-marriage. People who, after perusing the evidence of the foregoing pages, can believe that Shelley and Harriett were living harmoniously in February and March, 1814, would continue in that belief, even though it were proved that he ran off from his own home to Maimuna's house, because he caught her with her arm round another man's waist. The evidence of their estrangement in those and earlier months, is not discredited by what Mr. Peacock says of their concord at the time of their re-marriage.

On the other, I cannot refer the re-marriage to any wish on Shelley's part to put the legitimacy of his next child beyond question. Mr. Rossetti is of opinion that Shelley re-married Harriett because he knew her to be in the way to give him a second child, and therefore thought it prudent to put the infant's legitimacy beyond question. Whatever is urged by Mr. Rossetti deserves consideration; but on these points I see

grounds for differing from him. Shelley can scarcely have felt any need for the precaution. The *Edinburgh Reviewer* (October, 1882) speaks of the 'doubtful validity of the previous Scotch marriage,' but the doubt can scarcely have troubled Shelley, though he may have ascribed his action to the uncertainty. Soon after the Scotch marriage, Shelley had declared his intention to be re-married in England. That he did not act on this intention was, doubtless, due to sufficient legal assurance that the marriage was valid. Whilst Harriett was in her previous progress to maternity, it had never occurred to him that he ought to re-marry his wife in order to place the legitimacy of her issue beyond question. Why then should he entertain the doubt in 1814? With a legal adviser in the elder Mr. Medwin, a legal friend in Hogg, he cannot have feared his wife's possible heir might be declared illegitimate, unless he re-married Harriett by the Anglican form. Mr. Westbrook, however, may have been uneasy about the legal question, or have desired the re-marriage for his social credit's sake.

The re-marriage having been accomplished, Shelley returned to Maimuna, to consult her on his future movements. The enchantress, with snow-white tresses and 'dewy looks,' was, of course, the influence that caused the poet to settle for a while at Binfield. On 18th April, 1814, Shelley was again at a distance from his wife, who had gone with Miss Westbrook up to London, whence it was understood the elder sister would soon journey to Southampton, for the purpose of living there. Thus it was, that 'the blind and loathsome worm' passed, all too late, from her brother-in-law's domestic life. Peacock may have been right in assuming that Shelley and Harriett were staying together in Mrs. Boinville's house in April; but instead of being the lady's guests at Bracknell, the husband and wife may have been only her neighbours at Binfield. Anyhow, they were living at Binfield a month later, when Shelley went up to town and gave his heart to Mary Godwin, looking more than usually bright and charming in her 'frock of tartan.' Coming up to London on the 18th of May, Shelley left Harriett at Binfield, little imagining (it is said) that he would never again live as a husband with the woman he had so lately re-married. 'Shelley,' says Mr. Kegan Paul, writing from Field Place evidences, 'came to London on May 18th, leaving his wife at Binfield, certainly without the least idea that it was

to be a final separation from him.' A momentous date and admission by a writer drawing his facts from Field Place archives. In admitting that, when Shelley left his wife, she had no conception that their conjugal intercourse would not be renewed, Mr. Kegan Paul admits that Shelley deserted her—the charge against the poet, which has been so often and indignantly denied by some of his admirers.

Mr. Kegan Paul forbears to say that Shelley left Binfield on 18th May, 1814, *with* a secret resolve never to return to conjugal association with Harriett. All that can be gathered from Mr. Paul's words on this point is that, if Shelley formed the resolve before leaving Binfield, he forbore to impart it to her. In judging his conduct, it matters little whether he left Binfield with the resolve or without it. If the resolution was not formed before he left Berkshire, it was formed soon after his arrival in London, and for some considerable time before he communicated his purpose to her. In either case he deserted her. After determining to remain away from Harriett, Shelley omitted to give her timely notice of his purpose to keep away from her. He neither told her of his intention, nor sent her his address in London, so that she might be able to communicate with him. Besides withdrawing from her, he concealed himself from her. A husband who, withdrawing from his wife, neither advertises her of his purpose to keep away from her, nor sends her his address so that she may communicate with him, is guilty of deserting his wife in an especially unfeeling and cruel manner. For grave reasons a chivalric man may withdraw from his wife. On doing so, a chivalric man is careful to inform her of his purpose and reasons. He forbears to sharpen the pain and humiliation he deems himself constrained to inflict, by an insolent or inconsiderate silence, that exposes the object of his displeasure to the tortures of uncertainty and suspense. He does not leave her and her child-in-arms without any care whether or no she has money for her immediate necessities. Shelley did thus leave and keep away from his wife for a considerable period. On being thus deserted by her husband, Harriett is said to have had only fourteen shillings in her pocket. Had Shelley been the essentially chivalric creature his eulogists declare him, he could not have left his wife in this way, even though her offences had been far more repulsive than her sternest censors declare them.

It is true that the abandonment was of no long duration ; but the period during which Shelley forbore to communicate with his wife was so long, that his silence may be fairly described as persistent cruelty to a woman who, whatever her misconduct may have been, had far stronger claims to his consideration than greatly offending wives usually have to the consideration of their offended husbands. Mr. Rossetti speaks of a letter, written by Harriett 'on or about the 5th of July,' which shows her to have heard from Shelley 'about the 1st of the same month.' If she heard so soon from Shelley, the epistle seems to have afforded her information neither of his place of residence nor of his intention never to return to her; for Peacock declares that, on 7th July, 1814, she wrote to one of his friends a letter in which 'she expressed a confident belief that he must know where Shelley was, and entreated his assistance to induce him to return home.' Peacock adds, 'She was not even then aware that Shelley had finally left her.' Still, let us suppose that Shelley's silence to Harriett ceased on the earlier date, and ceased in such a way as to make her feel she was an object of his affection and that he would return to her ere long. Even in that case, the period of abandonment, in its most cruel form,—of abandonment attended with silence and concealment—covered full six weeks: a long period for a woman to be held in sharp anxiety.

The period of abandonment, in its most cruel form, certainly ended before the middle of July, 1814. On the 14th of that month Harriett arrived in London; on the two following days she was in personal communication with Shelley and William Godwin. By this time, though still ignorant of her husband's purpose to fly with Mary Godwin, Harriett was assured of his purpose to keep away from her. In vain Godwin strove to bring about the reconcilment of the youthful husband and wife. Finding that Shelley was bent on separation, insisted on separation, would for the moment be satisfied with nothing less than separation, Harriett yielded to the fate she could not resist, accepted the position she could not avoid, and *assented*, by acts as well as by tacit submission, to the arrangement that was forced upon her. She assented, by forbearing to resist her husband's will; she assented, by holding sullen, but in some degree friendly, communication with him, whilst he lived with Mary Godwin; she assented to the arrangement by corre-

sponding with him, receiving his visits, taking money from him, as gifts coming from his bounty—not as payment exacted by process of law, whilst Mary Godwin was living under his protection. This is a series of facts provable by superabundant evidence, that may be fairly said to justify the most precise and scrupulous writer in saying that the separation became, after some brief while, ‘a separation by mutual consent,’ and passed from an affair of conjugal abandonment into ‘an amicable agreement effected in virtue of a mutual understanding.’ The impression prevails that there exists some piece of legal draughting, some ‘regular agreement’ (as the phrase goes, duly signed and sealed, in evidence of this agreement), and that Lady Shelley and Mr. Garnett have, in some way, pledged themselves to produce this document for the satisfaction of the world. I cannot take this view of the case. Whilst Lady Shelley has not (to my knowledge) published separately and in her own name a single line, to account for this impression, Mr. Garnett, in his studiously guarded words, appears to abstain with nice and nervous caution from stating that any such legal instrument either exists or ever was executed. All he promises is ‘the publication of documents hitherto withheld,’ which will prove that the separation resulted from ‘long-continued unhappiness,’ and was ‘an amicable agreement effected in virtue of a mutual understanding,’—statements of whose truth there is abundant evidence. That Harriett eventually consented to what she could not help is certain. Moreover, it may be fairly argued that Harriett’s successive acts of consent to the arrangement, thus forced upon her, partook of the nature of condonation of the abandonment, so far as to qualify the sheer cruel desertion into an incident of the series of mere disagreements. There may, for all I know, be amongst the Field Place MSS. a regular signed and sealed agreement of separation, with stipulations touching the moneys to be paid by Shelley and received by Harriett,—an agreement comprising all the usual common-form assertions of free-will and qualified goodwill on the part of each of the parties. But to produce any such agreement would not be to disprove, or otherwise affect, what has been said of the desertion, which was the first stage of the separation.

None the less natural and reasonable for these acts of assent and condonation was it for Harriett, when her husband had departed for the Continent with Claire and Mary, to speak of the

whole affair as something that had been done wholly against her will and without her sanction,—to speak of it in terms that were calculated to make Peacock, in later time, confident she had never spoken of the separation (soon after its occurrence) as a matter to which she had consented. An honest and otherwise reliable witness, Peacock declares that, when she spoke of the separation to him at her father's house, soon after Shelley's flight across the water, Harriett spoke of it in terms, that 'decidedly contradicted the supposition of anything like separation by mutual consent.' About the same time she spoke to William Jerdan of the separation as a state of things forced upon her, in spite of her vehement protests. Recounting to Jerdan what passed between her and Shelley, when he told her their conjugal association was at an end, she said that, on hearing her doom, she exclaimed imploringly, 'Good God, Percy! what am I to do?' In answer to this pathetic question Shelley, extending his right hand to her in vehement gesticulation (and screeching, even as Byron used to screech under the agitations of overpowering rage), replied in the highest and most discordant pitch of his voice, 'Do? Do?—Do what other women do. They know what to do. Do as they do.'

The words unquestionably admit of the construction* Jerdan put upon them. At the same time, coming from an angry man, such words may merely signify that he is beside himself with rage; and it would be unjust to judge any man, young or old, by words he utters under a sudden and overpowering gust of fury. It must, moreover, be remembered that we have only Harriett's hearsay word that he made the violent speech. Still the alleged utterance was just such a one as might have come from the raging Shelley, who, in spite of all that is said

* What construction Jerdan put upon the words of wrath is known from a clause of the scorching passage of the famous article of the *Literary Gazette*, in which he set forth the worst of the evil capabilities to be looked for in Shelley's pupils:—'A disciple following his tenets would not hesitate to debauch, or, after debauching, to abandon, any woman; to such it would be matter of perfect indifference to rob a confiding father of his daughters, and incestuously to live with all the branches of a family, whose morals were ruined by the damned sophistry of the seducer; *to such it would be sport to tell a deserted wife to obtain with her pretty face support by prostitution*; and when the unhappy maniac sought refuge in self-destruction, to laugh at the fool while in the arms of associate strumpets.'—*Vide Literary Gazette*, 19th May, 1821.

of his gentleness, is known, from Mr. Kegan Paul's book about 'Godwin,' to have been a man of violent temper.

Apart from the influences to which the reader's attention has been called in previous pages, was there aught in the circumstances and conditions of Shelley's life, that can be held accountable for his determination to withdraw from Harriett and replace her by Mary Godwin? To show that he had been strongly interested in Mary Godwin, when he was lodging successively in Half-Moon Street and Pimlico, would be to suggest that the interest had, in the ensuing autumn and winter, matured into a romantic passion for her, or at least had predisposed him to fall violently in love with her in the following June. But though he saw her in the spring and summer of 1813, and must have observed that the bright and charming child gave promise of developing into a lovely woman, there are no sufficient grounds for thinking he either took much notice of her, or felt any especial concern in her at that time. Indeed, apart from the suspicious pains taken by Mr. Kegan Paul to make it seem that he never saw her for a single interview in 1813, I am not aware of any reason for conceiving it possible, that the passion which dominated him in the summer of 1814 may have proceeded from a sentiment of earlier date. And in respect to this cause for suspicion, I do not question that both Shelley and Mary may be said to suffer from the indiscretion of a single biographer. From an early day of his long sojourn in western quarters of the town, Shelley was too completely under Maimuna's influence to have much tender care for the mere school-girl. Moreover, in the summer of 1814, Shelley's friends were unanimous in thinking his passion for Mary a sentiment of quite recent birth. Whilst Hogg had no suspicion of its existence before the 8th of June, 1814, Peacock was confident that the passion was no less sudden than violent. 'Nothing,' says Peacock, 'that I ever read in tale or history could present a more striking image of a sudden, violent, irresistible, uncontrollable passion, than that under which I found him labouring when, at his request, I went up from the country to call upon him in London.'

In addition to the already indicated causes of estrangement, had Shelley, before going up to town on 18th May, 1814, discovered in Harriett's conduct any serious cause for dissatisfaction, likely to extinguish his fondness for her in a moment, and

replace it with a feeling of lively repugnance? For a long time it has been an open secret in Shelleyan coteries that documents are in existence which, if reliance could be placed on Shelley's statements about his own affairs, would constitute a strong body of *primâ facie* and *ex parte* evidence that, before he withdrew from her in May, 1814, he had found Harriett guilty of misconduct, that would have entitled him to divorce from her, had he sought it in the usual legal way.

It being probable that these documents, or their substance, will at no distant time be offered to the world as so much certain and indisputable evidence, that Shelley had good moral ground for breaking from his wife, it will be well for readers to anticipate the publication by settling in their minds what effect any such evidence—whether coming from Shelley's pen, or from the pens of writers deriving their information *from him*—should have on discreet and logical persons. Enough has been said of Shelley's veracity to show that it was not unimpeachable. The man, who had recourse to deception, when his convenience required him to use it; the man who, in 1811, made a statement about his mother and sisters, which his neighbours at Horsham did not hesitate to call an untrue statement; the man who wrote the wheedling letter to the Duke of Norfolk, in order to get money out of his father's pocket, cannot (to put the case mildly) be regarded as a strictly truthful person. It has also been shown that he was liable to delusions incompatible with perfect sanity. It will be shown in ensuing pages that thus untruthful and liable to insane delusions, in his earlier time, Shelley was no less untruthful and subject to delusions and (to use Peacock's term) semi-delusions, after leaving his wife. Bearing all this in mind, how should judicious persons regard any statements made by Shelley (or made by individuals speaking directly or indirectly on *his* authority, or in obedience to his influence), that before leaving Harriett he found her guilty of flagrant misconduct?

Surely, judicious persons will say of such evidence, 'These are mere *ex parte* statements. They are of less weight than most *ex parte* statements, because they proceed from a witness, who was on some occasions untruthful, and on several occasions the victim of extravagant and insane hallucinations. Coming from the chief actor in the Tanyrallt affair, from the man who for a time thought similar evil of his dearest male friend, these state-

ments to the dishonour of the wife he deserted must be considered with reference to one of his chief moral infirmities, and with reference to his mental peculiarities. These statements are not so much evidence of guilt in Harriett, as of delusion in her husband.'

The incredibility of such statements would, of course, be affected by the production of a clear confession by Harriett, that, before he left her, she had been conjugally faithless to him; or by the production of reasonable evidence that she did admit so much to her shame. But even such an admission would have to be considered with jealous regard to the influences and circumstances under which it was made, and also with reference to the curious fact that she had been in former time brought to believe, or to act as though she believed, that Hogg had made an attempt on her honour, which he did not make upon it.

There are other reasons for an opinion that Harriett cannot have been guilty of the offence which has been so long charged against her in the Shelleyan coteries. Peacock (Shelley's most intimate friend and executor), who knew Harriett intimately in the later months of 1813, and the earlier half of 1814, was confident she had been a true wife. 'I feel it,' he writes, 'due to the memory of Harriet to state my most decided conviction that her conduct as a wife was as pure, as true, as absolutely faultless as that of any who for such conduct are held most in honour.' This evidence to character should have more weight with judicial minds than any unsupported evidence to the contrary by her husband, who, in the middle of August, 1814, wrote to her from Troyes, begging her to join him and Claire, and Mary in Switzerland, and be happy in their society; and who, after his return to England, was desirous that she should live under the same roof with him and Mary Godwin. One hesitates to say where a man, holding Shelley's unusual views respecting the intercourse of the sexes, would draw the line between venial indiscretion and unpardonable depravity in feminine demeanour. Whatever her misconduct, Harriett was certainly entitled to a large measure of charitable consideration from the husband, who had taught her to think 'chastity . . . a monkish and evangelical superstition, a greater foe to natural temperance even than unintellectual sensuality.' But it is scarcely conceivable that even Shelley would have invited the

wife, on whose finger he had put a wedding-ring, to come to him and his ringless bride in Switzerland, had she to his knowledge, only a few months earlier, been guilty of the offences that have long been whispered against her.

Coming up to town on 18th May, 1814, Shelley (says Mr. Kegan Paul, in his light and happy style) 'was, of course, received in Godwin's house on the old footing of close intimacy, and rapidly fell in love with Mary.' He *was* so received with cordial greeting and hospitable confidence by Mr. Godwin and Mrs. Godwin. The girls (Mary and Claire being at home, during Fanny's absence to some one or another of her maternal relatives) also welcomed the youthful poet heartily. To most readers, it may appear that, because 'he was, *of course*, received in Godwin's house on the old footing of close intimacy,' he was under stringent obligations to respect the confidence thus reposed in him;—obligations so sacred as well as stringent, that his action to his host and his host's only daughter, to his hostess and her only daughter, must be declared one of the most shocking examples of domestic treason recorded in literary annals.

In three successive years—1812, 1813, 1814—Shelley had been received in Godwin's house on a 'footing of close intimacy.' The house was open to him whenever he cared to visit it. The master of the house, whom Shelley persisted in styling his teacher, friend, benefactor, was ever ready with counsel and sympathy for the young man. Had he been unmarried, the Godwins would have been slow to suspect evil in the young man of pleasant aspect and winning address. As he was married to a lovely girl, with whom they had every reason to think him living in mutual love, it never occurred to William Godwin and his wife that they should watch his behaviour to their children, as they would have observed it, had he been in a position to make one of them an offer. The confidence reposed in his honour was without limit or qualification. How did he respect this confidence, repay this trustful hospitality? Mr. Kegan Paul answers the question in seven words, 'He . . . rapidly fell in love with Mary.'

On 8th June, 1814, when exactly three weeks had passed since his arrival in town, Shelley ran upon Hogg in Cheapside, as the latter was returning from the scene of Lord Cochrane's trial to Gray's Inn. Bound for different places in the same direction, the friends walked together from Cheapside to Skinner

Street, when, on coming to the door of Godwin's shop, Shelley said to his companion, 'I must speak with Godwin; come in; I will not detain you long.' Passing through the shop, which was the only way of passage to the living-rooms of the house, the young men went straight upstairs to the quadrant-shaped parlour on the first floor, where Shelley expected to find his familiar friend and benefactor. That Shelley went upstairs in this fashion, without rapping or ringing, or sending any one from the shop to announce his arrival, indicates his close intimacy with Godwin and Mrs. Godwin,—shows how they allowed him the free run of the house, permitting him to come and go at his pleasure, as though the place were his own home. To Shelley's disappointment and discomposure Godwin was away from home. 'Where is Godwin?' he asked several times of Hogg, as though the latter were in Godwin's confidence and somehow accountable for his absence. Shelley was still fussing about in this way; when the door of the room was opened by a young girl, who exclaimed in a thrilling voice, 'Shelley!' Answering the ejaculation with one word, Shelley hastened from the room, leaving Hogg to meditate in solitude, and marvel at the momentary apparition of the 'very young female, fair and fair-haired, pale indeed, and with a piercing look, wearing a frock of tartan, an unusual dress in London at that time,' who had appeared for an instant, like a quick gleam of sunlight, only to disappear with her lover. Hogg saw no more of William Godwin's lovely child on that occasion. In a minute or two Shelley re-entered the room, saying 'Godwin is out; there is no use in waiting.' Godwin's absence had defeated the poet's plan for getting a long 'lover's interview' with his heart's idol, whilst Godwin should be talking with Hogg. Had the poet passed Hogg with a nod in Cheapside, he would have had the desired interview with Mary in her father's absence. As it was, he had allowed Hogg to discover an interesting secret. Under the circumstances, Shelley saw that his only chance of keeping the truth from the vigilant and humorous Hogg required him to continue the walk towards Gray's Inn, as though he had dropt in at the Juvenile Library, solely for the purpose of seeing Mary's father.

'Who is she?—a daughter?' Hogg inquired of Shelley, as they walked to the West.

'Yes.'

‘A daughter of William Godwin?’

‘The daughter,’ replied Shelley, ‘of Godwin and Mary.’

The brief answer was enough for Hogg. The whole position had been revealed to Hogg, who, on his westward way at his friend’s side, may be presumed to have debated, in a breast by no means devoid of trouble, how much and how little Harriett knew or suspected of what was going on in Skinner Street.

On some day of June, possibly preceding, but more probably following at a brief interval the day of Hogg’s first brief glimpse of Mary Godwin’s beauty, Shelley gave the girl the well-known verses, ‘Mine eyes were dim with tears unshed;’ the verses with the concluding stanza:—

‘Gentle and good and mild thou art,
Nor can I live if thou appear
Aught but thyself, or turn thine heart
Away from me, *or stoop to wear*
The mask of scorn, although it be
To hide the love thou feel’st for me.’

Though an attempt has been made to force another meaning on the lines here printed in italics, few readers will decline to regard them as pointing to the deception which Mary Godwin was practising at this time, in order to conceal from her family that Shelley regarded her with passion to which she responded. The blame provoked by the deceitfulness of the girl, who veiled her affection for the poet from observers in Skinner Street with an air and tone of scorn, should, of course, be given to the man who had won her heart, rather than to the child, who had recourse to artifice in his interest and her own. In other respects, also, the blame of a miserable business should be awarded to the married man, rather than the girl who was just five years his junior. She may be wholly acquitted, she is not to be suspected, of deliberately luring Shelley from his wife, and supplanting her in his affections. It should not be questioned that he made all the overtures and advances to Mary; and that he found it very difficult to persuade her to fly with him. It would have been strange had he found her an easy conquest; for (notwithstanding all that has been urged to the contrary) it is certain that she had been reared within the lines of conventional decorum and orthodoxy.

When he wrote that, though Mary Godwin ‘had been bred up to regard love as the essential part of marriage, she was a

perfectly pure and innocent woman,' (meaning, of course, that she was trained in childhood to hold certain of her parents' earlier and notorious views respecting marriage, *i.e.* that love was a sufficient sanction of conjugal union, and that where such love existed it was better for spouses to live together in Free Love than in the bondage of Lawful Wedlock), Mr. Froude only showed his absolute ignorance of the matters on which he wrote so rashly, under the insufficient instructions of the person or persons who should have instructed him better. It is certain that, during their brief association, William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft modified those views of marriage so far as to be lawfully married to one another; that soon after Mary Wollstonecraft's death, if not during her life, Godwin abandoned them altogether; and that his daughter by her was *not* educated to regard the matrimonial rite as an idle form.

In a former chapter of this work evidence has been given, under Godwin's own hand, that Mary Wollstonecraft's children were *not* educated in accordance with their mother's peculiar views; that he deemed so clever a boy as Charles Clairmont was in his seventeenth year far too young for initiation in Free Thought; that on sending the boy Anthony Collins's sober and moderate book, he was urgent that Mary should not be allowed to see a line of it. Never touched with Free Contract sentiment, the second Mrs. Godwin held the Free Contract people in aversion, and their doctrines in contemptuous detestation. Had it been otherwise, she would have been spoken of less harshly by some of her husband's friends.

Mary was educated by her father and his second wife, and by governesses of their selection. Is it conceivable that she was educated by her father and stepmother in principles which the former of the two abandoned in her infancy, and the latter had never tolerated? If Mary Godwin left behind her any writing in evidence that she was educated to mate in Free Contract, she left behind her a piece of false testimony. To show how far she was from favouring the Free Contract, how absolutely free from Free Contract sentiment, she was before she came under Shelley's influence, it is enough to say that, even so late as July, 1814, after surrendering her heart so completely to him as to conceive herself incapable of loving any one else, she declared it impossible for her to live with him con-

jugally during his wife's existence. At the same time, in the fervour of her passion for him she declared she would never marry any other man. In her respect for the matrimonial rite, even at the very moment of avowing herself incapable of giving herself to any other man, she deemed it absolutely impossible for her to live with Shelley till death shall have put him in a position to make her his lawful wife. Mr. Froude admits that this was so. Yet he insists that she was educated to regard the Free Contract with tolerance.

Lady Shelley speaks even more precisely on this point than Mr. Froude:—

‘The theories,’ says Lady Shelley, ‘in which the daughter of the authors of *Political Justice* and of the *Rights of Woman* had been educated, spared her from any conflict between her duty and her affection; for she was the child of parents whose writings had had for their object to prove that marriage was one among the many institutions which a new era in the history of mankind was about to sweep away. By her father, whom she loved—by the writings of her mother, whom she had been taught to venerate—these doctrines had been rendered familiar to her mind.’

This whole passage is made up of statements that, so far as Mary Godwin is concerned, are absolutely the reverse of historic truth. What? Mary's education in Free Contract principles ‘spared her from any conflict between her duty and her affection?’ Why at one moment she is declaring she can't be Shelley's mistress, but will never marry any other man; a few days later she sacrifices her principles and does become his mistress; and yet there was no conflict of duty and affection!

It is in the highest degree improbable that, till Shelley spoke to her of her mother's views and story, using them as arguments why she should not shrink from becoming his mistress, Mary Godwin had ever heard aught of Mary Wollstonecraft's dangerous opinions and discreditable career. William Godwin's daughter was only a few days old when her mother died. Only three years and four months Mary's senior, Fanny Imlay was too young at her mother's death to have, in later time, any recollections to impart to Mary about their common parent. Who was at all likely to be at pains to acquaint Mary in her early childhood with her mother's story? It is not usual for a man, after taking a second wife and having issue by her, to be loquacious about his first wife to her children in their

tender age. The cold, unsentimental, unemotional Godwin was not likely to talk of Mary Wollstonecraft to either of her children. Is it conceivable that whilst they were of tender age, or in later years, when they had become inquisitive girls, he revealed to them the particulars of their mother's story,—told Fanny that she was of shameful birth; told Mary that her sister was a bastard; unfolded to their inquiring minds the doctrines of Free Contract; informed them that their mother held opinions about marriage which he had himself abandoned as dangerous and pernicious; instructed them out of pious regard to her memory that they should on coming to womanly age think of the matrimonial rite as an idle form? Is it imaginable that the second Mrs. Godwin, intent on holding her curiously constituted family within the lines of conventional respectability, enlightened Fanny, and Claire, and Mary, on the very matters she was especially desirous of keeping from their knowledge?

It is, however, certain that Mary Godwin heard much about her mother from Shelley's lips in 1814. The subject, in respect to which Godwin had been wisely reticent to his child, Shelley did not hesitate to use for the accomplishment of his purpose. No one knew better than Shelley, that his familiar friend and benefactor had long since ceased to approve the Free Contract. No one knew better than Shelley, how careful his familiar friend had been to withhold from his only daughter those particulars of her mother's career that, on being communicated to her, might dispose the imaginative, generous, fearless, too self-dependent child to adopt her mother's earlier views about marriage. At the same time Shelley saw that, to break down the girl's reverence for marriage and thereby remove the grand obstacle to his designs upon her, his best course was to enlighten the sixteen-years-old girl on those points of her domestic story, which her father was especially desirous to keep from her knowledge. It is needless to say that the young man, who had illuminated, or tried to illuminate, so many girls of tender age out of the views in which they had been educated, was not withheld from illuminating Mary out of her superstitious reverence for marriage by any weak sentiment of loyalty to his familiar friend,—the friend whom he was in the habit of styling his greatest benefactor.

As the Skinner-Street house, notwithstanding the hospitable

freedom accorded to him within its walls, was no place where he could urge his suit to Mary and teach her to approve the Free Contract, it appeared well to Shelley, in his strength, to make appointments for private interviews with Mary at her mother's grave in Old St. Pancras churchyard, and well to the sixteen-years-old Mary, in her weakness and romantic silliness, to meet him there. Old St. Pancras churchyard was a comparatively secluded place, and Mr. Kegan Paul is careful to record that 'Mary Wollstonecraft's grave was shaded by a fine weeping willow.' I cannot see that the character and magnitude of the tree over Mary Wollstonecraft's grave ought to affect the reader's judgment of what took place under it in the warm days of June and July, 1814. But Mr. Kegan Paul seems to think otherwise; and as I wish to handle this matter with a liberal regard for all extenuating circumstances, I beg my readers to bear in mind that Mary Wollstonecraft's grave was shaded by a fine weeping willow.

Whilst gentle breezes made music in the long leaves of this trysting-tree, Shelley,—with *Queen Mab* and its notes in his hand, and the writings of William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft in his memory,—explained to Mary Godwin why 'chastity was a monkish and evangelical superstition;' why her mother had very properly come to the conclusion that she might live conjugally with Gilbert Imlay in Paris, without being married to him; why a few years later her mother had no less virtuously determined to live in Free Contract with William Godwin; and why she, Mary Godwin (the daughter of so exemplary and altogether phenomenal a woman as Mary Wollstonecraft), might with honour and virtue become his wife in the highest sense, although inhuman laws and tyrannic custom precluded him from making her his wife in another and altogether trivial sense. Readers may not forget that Shelley was within a few days of being Mary's senior by five years; that he was so greatly Mary's social superior as to figure in her esteem as a sort of young prince; that he was a young man of a singularly pleasant appearance and charming address; that she was only sixteen years old, and living under the dominion of a stern stepmother, who, besides insisting that Mary should darn her stockings, was so unreasonable as to think a girl of her age and social degree should know how to make a beef-steak pudding.

Instead of suffering from no conflict of duty and affection (as Lady Shelley avers), it is certain that poor sixteen-years-old Mary was distracted and cruelly tortured by the conflict of her desire to be good, with her inclination to be very naughty. She was troubled by thoughts of Percy's wife, her own friend; and by thoughts of the shame and sorrow that would come to her old father, if she did as Percy asked her. She was stung by a feeling that, as Percy was her father's young friend, and moreover a young friend to whom her father had been very good and kind, he should not ask of her what he was asking. Tears sprung to her eyes as she thought of the disgrace she would bring on her home and people if she yielded. There were moments when she could not see why she could be right in doing what was wrong in her eyes, because her mother was not wrong in doing what seemed right to her. She implored Percy not to ask so much of her. Promising to love him for ever, promising that no other man should ever find a place in her heart, acknowledging that she loved him unutterably, she entreated Percy, as he was good and clever, so bright a poet, and so sweet to her soul, to be satisfied with her confession and vows of perpetual fidelity. But this was not enough for the young gentleman who 'might have been the Saviour of the World.' He wanted something more, and was determined to have all he wanted, although Mary was the only daughter of his friend and benefactor. Why are readers indignant against this young man, who was so young and enthusiastic, and only (as Mr. Froude says) acting on emotional theories of liberty?

Whilst he was having stolen interviews with his familiar friend's sixteen-years-old daughter under the willow-tree, he had a remarkable conference with his friend Peacock, who, on coming from the country to London for the meeting, found the author of *Queen Mab* in a state of extreme excitement. His eyes were bloodshot, his hair disheveled, his dress disordered; and whilst talking with extravagant energy he caught up a bottle of laudanum, saying vehemently as he clutched the vessel of poisonous drink, 'I never part with this. I am always repeating to myself your lines from Sophocles:—

' Man's happiest lot is not to be :
And when we tread life's thorny steep,
Most blest are they, who earliest free
Descend to death's eternal sleep.'

In the ensuing conversation (*vide* Peacock's collected *Works*) Shelley did not even suggest that Harriett's behaviour had afforded him any serious cause of dissatisfaction. On the contrary, whilst reflecting on her mental unfitness for the position to which he had so imprudently exalted her, he admitted that she was a noble animal.

'Every one, who knows me,' he said, 'must know that the partner of my life should be one who can feel poetry and understand philosophy. Harriett is a noble animal, but she can do neither.'

'It always appeared to me,' replied Peacock, 'that you were very fond of Harriett.'

'But you did not know how I hated her sister,' rejoined Shelley; forbearing to say aught in dissent from, or assent to, Peacock's remark on his former show of fondness for his wife.

To another of his friends Shelley commended Harriett for being 'a noble animal,' adding words which seemed to imply that, in her nobleness, she would acquiesce in the transference of his affections from herself to William Godwin's daughter.

But because he spoke thus fairly of Harriett to persons, who knew she had given him no grave cause of offence, it does not follow that he was not at the same time charging her with serious misconduct to those, who were not so well qualified to judge between her and him. To those who remember in what different strains he wrote of his father to the Duke of Norfolk and William Godwin, it is needless to say that he was capable of speaking justly of a person, with whom he was displeased, to individuals cognizant of the real causes of his displeasure, and no less unjustly to persons of inferior or no information touching the nature of the quarrel.

Whilst Mary Godwin was being illuminated into Free Contract in Old St. Pancras churchyard, and educated in deceit in Skinner Street, the pupil and her teacher had a sympathetic confidante in Claire,—the maiden of bright eyes, olive complexion, Italian features, and southern fervour. It is needless to remind readers that Claire was not older than Mary by so much as Mr. Kegan Paul repeatedly asserts in the very book, which affords evidence that they were nearly of the same age. Elsewhere it has been told how (though they bickered and quarreled smartly once and again in Shelley's life, and came

after his death to hate one another cordially) these daughters of one home, who called the same man 'papa' and the same woman 'mamma,' were living together in 1814 in the fullest mutual confidence, and in affection glowing with the impetuosity of girlish romance. Cognizant of their meetings under the weeping willow, Claire knew why Shelley and her sister-by-affinity met so often at the trysting-tree. In Skinner Street, when Mary, the piquant brown-eyed blonde, wore her disguise, she did not assume 'the mask of scorn' to hide her love of Shelley from her sister-by-affinity. Delighting in the sentimental affair, as though it were a mere game played for her amusement in the midsummer holidays, Claire, the impetuous and saucy, was ever at hand to divert the attention of the elders from the proceedings of her two playmates. Had Fanny been at home the game might not have been carried to its calamitous *dénouement*, for besides being orderly and dutiful, and ever on the side of authority, the eldest of the three sisters had an influence over Shelley which would certainly have been exercised for good, had she detected his evil purpose. It was unfortunate for the two younger girls that Fanny was away from home. It was unfortunate for Mary, that Claire was at hand to aid and encourage her and Shelley. Without Claire's help Shelley would most likely have failed to accomplish his purpose. But for her sister's sympathy and assistance, it is scarcely conceivable that Mary (remarkable though she was for self-dependence and resoluteness) would have left her home. It was in no small degree due to Claire's cleverness, in covering the actions of the lovers, that the first week of July was over before their proceedings caused Godwin uneasiness. What, on so late a day, caused the philosopher to think his young friend too attentive to Mary, does not appear. Possibly neighbours had told him of the meetings under the trysting-tree. Possibly Mrs. Godwin had detected something suspicious in Mary's countenance, at a moment when she forgot to wear the mask of scorn. Anyhow, on the 8th of July, Godwin spoke to his daughter respecting her demeanour to Shelley, and on the same day wrote Shelley a letter, which was answered in a way that abated the philosopher's apprehensions without altogether putting an end to his disquiet. Speaking of Shelley's reply to his benefactor's epistle, Mr. Kegan Paul says, 'The explanation was satisfactory.' The explanation must, therefore, have been dis-

ingenuous, for no honest reply could have been otherwise than most unsatisfactory. The consequence of the explanation was that the two familiar friends continued to meet daily, though the veteran decided that for a brief while Shelley should not dine at Skinner Street. Probably it was due to Godwin that Mrs. Shelley was at length informed of her husband's place of abode. Anyhow, Harriett came up to town and saw both Godwin and Shelley, the former of whom did his utmost to reconcile the husband and wife, whilst the latter held to his purpose of making Mary his mistress. Almost to the last moment it was uncertain what would be the issue of the fierce conflict between passion and duty in her breast. It is not surprising that eventually she yielded to his entreaties, and his pathetic account of the wrongs he had endured in boyhood from the barbarous father, who would have consigned him for life to a lunatic asylum, had it not been for Dr. Lind's timely intervention. How was the inexperienced and romantic girl to suspect that the thrilling tale was a tissue of romantic fancies and delusive inventions? Small blame to her for yielding, in comparison with the blame due to the man, who subdued her to his will.

On the evening of 27th July, 1814, William Godwin's household retired to rest under circumstances which rendered the man of letters, his wife, and his stepson (Charles Clairmont) wholly unsuspecting of the purpose and pre-arrangements of the two girls. On the morrow, Mr. and Mrs. Godwin awoke to learn that Claire and Mary had left the house at daybreak. An examination of their sleeping apartment discovered that the two girls had not quitted their home without making preparations for an absence of some duration, for they had taken enough of their clothing to show that a speedy return was no part of their plan. Thus it was that they left their homes at four o'clock a.m., and hastened to the spot where Shelley awaited them in a carriage. Not content with carrying off his familiar friend's sixteen-years-old daughter, Shelley repaid Mrs. Godwin's hospitality by carrying off *her* sixteen-years-old (or, perhaps, seventeen-years-old) daughter, in order that he and Mary should have an agreeable travelling companion.

Nothing connected with this miserable business is more strange than that it has been treated by successive writers as though it were a wholesome and delightful love-story, redound-

ing, on the whole, to the credit of both principals. The affair has been handled by these writers so effectually that many a reader will have to liberate himself from their influence by a strenuous effort before seeing that, in thus carrying off his friend's sixteen-years-old daughter, Shelley was guilty of the crime which he professed to hold in the highest repugnance. In carrying off John Westbrook's sixteen-years-old daughter when he was in a position to marry her, Shelley committed nothing more than an act of elopement. But in carrying off his familiar friend's child when he could not marry her, and had no prospect of ever being able to marry her, he was guilty of an act of seduction. If regard is had to his intimacy with her father, the deception he practised towards him, and the means he employed to overcome her sense of duty, it cannot be questioned that Shelley's triumph over his familiar friend's daughter was a very bad case of domestic treason. That an unlooked-for incident enabled him, something more than two years later, to marry her, and that on the occurrence of this incident he lost no time in making her his wife, are facts in no way affecting the quality of his action towards his friend's sixteen-years-old daughter in 1814. That he married her as soon as he could is a fact to be remembered to the poet's credit in the general estimate of his character, and more especially of his affection for the girl. But what he did at the end of 1816 could not affect the legal and moral quality of what he did in the summer of 1814. There must be no misunderstanding on this point. Till the English people shall modify and rearrange the English language into accordance with the crotchets and sensibilities of our favourers of the Free Contract, the man who shall lure a sixteen-years-old girl from her home and parents, and induce her to live with him as a mistress, must be declared guilty of an offence which is deemed odious even by libertines.

Mr. Froude is of opinion that Shelley should be judged leniently for taking to himself this girl because he was young and enthusiastic. Mr. Froude is also of opinion that Mary Godwin should be judged leniently because she was young and enthusiastic. I concur with Mr. Froude in thinking that Mary should not be severely judged. To her my compassion goes as freely as Mr. Froude requires. She was a naughty girl. But who can forbear to make charitable allowance for so young and inexperienced a girl? She was (as Mr. Froude urges)

enthusiastic; she was also young, very young,—only sixteen years old.

There are other reasons for being lenient and pitiful to this poor child, reared though she was in honest principles and absolute ignorance of her mother's perverse views. Who seduced her? She was not led astray by an ordinary tempter, but by a young man of singular comeliness, a poet who clothed his prayers with the images of speech most likely to render them irresistible. She had done nothing in the hope of winning his love, said nothing by lip or look to lure him from loyalty to Harriett, when he came quickly upon her and said 'You shall be mine!' She was wooed and won by Shelley! Remember how (*though* he was Shelley) she contended with him, fought him, prayed to him for mercy; how passionately she declared to him, in spoken words and written words, that, though she loved him wholly, and would never give herself to any other man, she would not, could not, dared not, give herself to him till he could marry her.

Could nothing be urged in palliation of her misconduct, but that she was young and enthusiastic, I should plead less earnestly in her behalf. I cannot concur with Mr. Froude in holding that youth and enthusiasm should of themselves be pronounced considerable extenuations of wrongful action, of which the young and enthusiastic are more likely than other persons to be guilty. On the contrary, Mr. Froude must pardon a white-headed writer for telling him frankly, it is ill for a man of his still greater age to teach (however lightly and elegantly) in a popular magazine, that to act as Shelley and Mary acted in their elopement, is sometimes to be guilty of nothing worse than 'the sin of acting on emotional theories of liberty.' Moreover, I decline to regard Shelley's youth in 1814 as a matter to be urged strongly in mitigation of the sentence to be passed upon him. His youth unquestionably may be pleaded in *misericordiam* when he is under trial for running away with John Westbrook's daughter. But the offence he committed in 1814 was no mere elopement, and he had long since ceased to be a child. When he posted seaward along the Dover Road, with Mary Godwin by his side, he was within a week of his twenty-third year. Age by the calendar is not the only thing to be considered in estimating a man's moral responsibility. Regard should also be had to the discipline of circumstances. It wanted now only a month of three

years since Shelley ran off with John Westbrook's lovely child. A man who is a father, and has been a husband for nearly three years, is not to be judged as a mere stripling. He was five years older than Mary. Those five years spent in the world gave him greatly the advantage over Mary, and he had used the advantage mercilessly against her. On the threshold of his twenty-third year a young man has lived quite long enough to know that he should not seduce his intimate friend's sixteen-years-old daughter.

Should Mr. Froude write on this question again, he will do well to drop the plea of youth. Moreover, Mr. Froude, at any sacrifice of feeling, must throw overboard that elegant euphuism about 'the sin of acting on emotional theories of liberty.' That Shelley was under the influence of emotion throughout his suit to Mary is certain. It is not unusual for people to be under the influence of emotion when they are in love. But there was nothing emotional in Shelley's theories respecting the Freedom of Lovers to be off with an old and on with a new love at pleasure. I have wasted much pains in exhibiting the origin of those theories, and tracing their growth through his boyish novels and his letters to Hogg and Godwin, to their development in the anti-matrimonial note to *Queen Mab*, if it is necessary to remind my readers that Shelley's views about wedlock—views in which he persisted to the last hour of his life—were embraced in his boyhood long before he formulated them in the *Queen Mab* note. Never were theories formed with greater deliberation, brooded over more calmly, acted upon more resolutely by a social innovator. Holding them tenaciously long before he promulgated them in the famous note, he did not act upon them till *Queen Mab* had been in secret circulation for considerably more than a year. In speaking of them as emotional theories, Mr. Froude shows how absolutely ignorant he was of the matters about which he wrote so rashly.

A note in one of William Godwin's diaries indicates that he regarded the fugitives as having left his house at five o'clock of the early morning. But there are grounds for thinking the flight began an hour earlier. Anyhow, long before London was awake and stirring, Shelley and the two girls were clear of the town and clattering towards the sea. Towards noon the sun bore down upon them with scorching vehemence, and the

remainder of the journey on wheels was made in heat so intense and overpowering, that Mary Godwin nearly fainted under it. The journey closed with a serious disappointment to the travellers. On alighting at Dover at about 4 p.m., they found themselves too late for the Calais packet, and no other public boat would start for the French port till the following day. To all three it was of the highest moment that they should cross the Channel as quickly as possible. Mary and Claire were too well acquainted with their mother's energy to have any doubt, that on discovering their flight she would soon be following them. Had Mary been less than sixteen years of age, Shelley, in case of his arrest on English ground, would have been liable, under the circumstances, to imprisonment for two years; and under a certain contingency, even to five years' incarceration. But though Mary's age exempted him from the heavy punishment to which he would have been liable had she been a year younger, he was aware that, if he were overtaken by Mrs. Godwin on this side the Channel, the Mayor of Dover would aid her effectually in regaining possession of her daughter and step-daughter. To secure his prize it was needful that he should cross the water without passing another night on English soil.

As the lovely evening promised a quick and agreeable passage, Shelley hired some seamen to carry him and the two girls (without their boxes) to Calais in an open boat; and as soon as Mary had revived herself with a sea-bath, the trio went on board the frail vessel, hoping to touch the French sands within two hours. But the weather failed to keep its promise. At first their progress was slow from lack of wind; but as the moon rose and night came on, the faint breeze freshened into a gale, attended with signs of a coming storm. Besides being violent the wind soon became contrary; and after working well out to sea the sailors began to despair of reaching Calais, and talked of making for Boulogne. Some hours later, a squall striking the sail nearly capsized the boat, that seemed likely to perish in the thunder-storm, which made the mariners fearful. Fortunately the gale abated, and the wind, changing its course, carried the craft straight for Calais, where the fugitives,—weary, cold, and drenched to the skin,—arrived at sunrise; their plight being the more pitiable, because they had left their boxes at the Dover custom-house, to follow by the next day's packet.

Regaining their energy and cheerfulness, whilst waiting for

their luggage, the trio ('three' was Shelley's favourite number for a trip) remained at their Calais hotel till Saturday afternoon (July the 30th), when they started for Paris in a cabriolet, drawn by three horses abreast, under the control of the queer little postillion, who wore a long pig-tail and *craquéed* his whip in a style that delighted the girls. But though they made no long stay at the French port, they tarried there long enough to have cause for congratulating themselves on having crossed the Channel so promptly. The sisters had not overrated their mother's spirit and alertness. Catching the boat which brought the fugitives their luggage, Mrs. Godwin surprised them with a visit on Saturday morning; her arrival at the hotel being announced to them by the landlord, who hastened to their room with intelligence that a fat English Madame had come to the house, and was bent on seeing her daughters, with whom (according to Madame's account) Monsieur had run away. How Mrs. Godwin was received by the trio may be imagined. Mary laughed saucily at the step-mother, from whose authority she had escaped. Claire answered her mother's sharp speech by declaring she should not return to London till she had seen something of the world. If Shelley was not wanting in outward civility to the lady, of whose bread and salt he had partaken so freely, he was at pains to record in the journal which he and Mary had already begun to keep, how disdainfully his friend's wife had been described by the Calais taverner. In the memoranda of the second day's entry it is told how the landlord announced that 'a fat lady had arrived who said that I had run away with her daughter,' the personal pronoun and whole structure of the phrase showing that the words were a portion of Shelley's contribution to the entry. For this scrap from Shelley's diary we are indebted to Mr. Kegan Paul, who wishes the readers of *William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries*, to chuckle over the evidence that Mrs. Godwin was fat, that a French innkeeper derided her for being fat, and that Shelley was tickled by what the innkeeper said of the gentlewoman. Had one of Byron's numerous diaries contained these same words in ridicule of a lady whose hospitality he had abused, what a rout the Shelleyan enthusiasts would have made about the diarist's ingrained vulgarity!

A few words may here be said of the journal which Shelley and Mary began to keep at this point of their joint-story, and

kept conjointly for a considerable period. It has been averred by Shelleyan enthusiasts that this journal was thus kept by the poet and Mary without a single day's break up to the date of Shelley's death. This journal has been declared a source of information by which every day, every hour of the poet's life from the very first day of his association with Mary Godwin, can be accounted for. The journal has been held out by the Field Place scribes *in terrorem* against all persons, presuming to question anything uttered by a small 'ring' of Shelleyan specialists, as a source of evidence that may at any moment be used to cover such presumptuous persons with discredit. It is therefore well that in a book written by one of the presumptuous personages, prominence should be given to the reasons for questioning whether this joint-journal was kept for so long a period, and in so unbroken a manner as certain writers have declared; and also to the far stronger reasons for thinking the journal may have been altered and 'doctored' by Mary Godwin after her husband's death.

On 26th January, 1819, Shelley wrote from Naples (where he was then staying *with* his wife) these words, 'In my accounts of pictures and things I am more pleased to interest you than the many; Besides, I keep no journal, and the only records of my voyage will be the letters I send you.'

Observe how Shelley in a confidential letter to one of his closest friends declares that he is not keeping a journal, and that the letters he is sending his friend will be the only record of the part of his career to which the letters refer. If Shelley's statements about his personal affairs could be relied upon, the words would be sufficient evidence that he was not then keeping a journal, that his letters to Peacock were the only authoritative record of his doings at this particular point of his career, and that, therefore, to the best of his knowledge and belief, his wife was not then keeping a record of his doings. If he was at that time keeping a journal, he wrote to Peacock what was untrue. Unless he had reason for thinking that no record of his life was being kept at that time either by his wife or any other person, he was less than truthful. If Mr. Garnett was right in saying Shelley began a diary in 1814, which accounts for every day of his life, Shelley was wrong in saying he was keeping no record of his life in January, 1819. Mr. Rossetti suggests that the inconsistency between Shelley's

words and Mr. Garnett's words may be only apparent, as Shelley may 'sometimes have intermitted his journalizing, and then his wife kept it up.' But this reasonable suggestion does not dispose of the difficulty. If the suggestion is correct, Mrs. Shelley must have filled in and kept up the journal with her husband's knowledge, or without it. If she kept the diary with his knowledge and sanction, the journal remained a thing for which he was so far responsible, that it should have precluded him from saying he kept no journal. If he knew Mrs. Shelley was keeping a daily record of his doings, he was untruthful in saying the letters would be the only record of those doings. On the other hand, if Mrs. Shelley kept the journal without his knowledge, the diary during the times of its being so kept was not his journal, but simply Mrs. Shelley's journal, and Mr. Garnett erred in writing of it as a record for which Shelley was responsible from first to last.

Let me now pass to the reasons why the statements of this journal should be received with caution. The journal was in Mrs. Shelley's keeping after her husband's death, some portions of it having been published during his life, whilst other portions are even yet withheld from critical scrutiny. It will be admitted that *primâ facie* the poet's widow was far less likely to alter the printed and published portions of the record than to alter the MS. and undivulged entries; since in tampering with the published portions she would be more or less liable to exposure, whereas in altering the unpublished portion she would feel secure from detection. It will also be admitted that to show Mrs. Shelley did, after her husband's death, tamper with and alter the published portions, for the express purpose of removing an important matter of evidence from them, is to prove her quite capable of tampering with, and altering the unpublished portions, should she be tempted strongly to do so. I charge Mrs. Shelley with having thus tampered with the published portions of the record.

In 1814 Mary and Claire were sisters, ever thinking and speaking of one another as sisters. In 1814 years had still to pass (albeit they often had smart tiffs and differences) before they ceased to think and speak of one another with sisterly love and in sisterly fashion. Hence, at Paris in August, 1814, it was natural for Mary Godwin to write in her journal:—

'We resolved to walk through France; but as I was too weak for

any considerable distance, and *my sister* could not be supposed to walk as far as S * * * each day, we determined to purchase an ass to carry our portmanteau and one of us by turns.'

To call attention to 'my sister' I have printed the two words in italics. In December, 1817, when Claire had been for some time Byron's mistress, and after being discarded by him had given birth to Allegra, Shelley and Mary published the journal (in which these words occur), together with certain well-known letters and the poem on *Mont Blanc*, under the title of *History of a Six Weeks' Tour through a part of France, Switzerland, Germany, and Holland*: With letters descriptive of a sail round the Lake of Geneva and of the Glaciers of Chamouni: 'the book being provided with a preface written by Shelley himself, which contains these words:—

'Those whose youth has been past as their's (with what success it imports not) in pursuing, like the swallow, the inconstant summer of delight and beauty which invests the visible world, will perhaps find some entertainment in following the author, *with her husband and sister*, on foot, through part of France and Switzerland, and in sailing with her down the castled Rhine, through scenes beautiful in themselves, but which, since she visited them, a great poet has clothed with the freshness of a diviner nature.'

Thus in the journal, which has been dealt with by the Shelleyan specialists as the joint-production of Shelley and Mary, and in the Preface of which Shelley was the sole author, Claire is styled Mary's *sister*. This is conclusive evidence of the regard in which Claire was held by Shelley and Mary from 1814 to the end of 1817. Jointly they style her 'sister.' Shelley by himself styles Claire his wife's sister. What does Mrs. Shelley do in 1840, when she has ceased to love Claire, and lived to think of her as a vexatious and discreditable connexion? In the last named year, on producing a new edition of the *Six Weeks' Tour*, she does her utmost to obliterate the evidence of her relationship to her old playmate and travelling companion, by substituting the word 'friend,' for the word 'sister,' in each of the above-given passages. She thus tampers with the text of the journal of which her husband was joint-author, and the text of the Preface, written altogether by her husband, in order to withdraw evidence which he put before the world. Am I wrong in saying that the widow, who dealt thus with her husband's

printed words, was capable of altering the unpublished entries of diaries kept by herself and her husband ?

Posting to Paris, where they stayed for a week, the trio entered the French capital with so little money that Shelley was compelled to sell his watch and chain for eight Napoleons and five francs, a part of which sum he is said to have remitted to Harriett. On the arrival of a remittance from England of 60*l.*, which is noticed in the diary as setting them 'free' from a kind of imprisonment which they found very irksome, the travellers made a curious plan for enjoying their financial liberty and acted upon it promptly ; in spite of the dissuasive eloquence of their landlady, who assured Mary and Claire, that in traversing a country populous with recently disbanded soldiers, they would expose themselves to insult and to outrage far worse than mere insolence. Mainly from considerations of economy, though in some degree, perhaps, from appetite for novel adventure, they determined to walk through France.

With clothing that could be packed in a single portmanteau and a dear little donkey that, besides carrying the portmanteau, would carry them by turns, Mary and Claire were certain they could journey to Switzerland with keen enjoyment and no excessive fatigue ; whilst Shelley (an excellent walker) could, of course, trudge the whole way on foot, bearing a small basket of provisions for their frugal meals. The scheme looked well on paper ; and had circumstances been as compliant as the adventurers were imaginative the plan would have worked admirably. The portmanteau would have been none too heavy and the donkey none too weak ; every village in which they desired to rest would have afforded them clean beds and sufficient cookery ; the weather would never have been too hot, the roads never too stony. But the circumstances were too rigorous and unyielding. It was to their misfortune that, instead of buying a competent ass in the Parisian ass-market, Claire and Shelley selected a diminutive animal, that in less than twenty-four hours proved insufficient for the place. Still it was all merriment at the outset to the girls, who prattled merrily on the way from Paris (which they left at four p.m.) to Charenton, which they entered some six hours later. Dressed in black silk, the sisters (on leaving coach and taking the donkey at the barrier) congratulated themselves on their choice of a costume, the lightness of their portmanteau, the mild intelligence of their dear little

donkey. At the first view of Charenton in the valley watered by the Seine, Claire (in sly raillery at Shelley) ejaculated, 'Oh! this is beautiful enough: let us live here.' In the morning, when, on recognizing the donkey's incompetence they replaced it with a mule (bought for ten Napoleons), the girls may have been troubled with doubts whether 'black' was the best 'colour for standing white dust.' Soon the temper of the tourists was tested by trials more grievous than fatigue and the dust of hot highways. The fare of the *cabarets* was coarse, the company in them not chiefly remarkable for refinement, the bedding neither comfortable nor clean. The peasants might have been something less morose to gentle strangers, in no degree responsible for the excesses of the brutal Cossacks. On nearing Trois Maisons, Shelley sprained his ankle so badly that the girls were compelled to walk an entire day's journey and let him ride on their mule. At Troyes he could scarcely put his lame foot to the ground; Mary was 'dead-beat' with fatigue; Claire could no longer cry out gleefully, 'I am glad we did not stay at Charenton, but let us live here.' The bright girl's cheeriest cry just then may well have been 'Beds,—and let's sleep here for ever.'

On the morrow, 13th August, 1814 (and maybe in the absence of Mary and Claire, capable of strolling through the town), Shelley, whose lameness kept him a prisoner to the hotel, took pen in hand and wrote his wife a remarkable epistle. Opening with an assurance that it is written, in order that she may realize how he holds her in remembrance, this epistle from Shelley to the wife he has left in England begins with 'My dearest Harriett,' and closes with a declaration of enduring affection for her:—a declaration preceded by a message of love to their sweet little Ianthe. 'I write,' he says, 'to urge you to come to Switzerland, where you will, at least, find one firm and constant friend, to whom your interests will be always dear,—by whom your feelings will never be wilfully injured.' It is scarcely conceivable that in his heart Shelley believed Harriett guilty of any heinous offence against his honour, when he thus begged her to join him in Switzerland. After chatting to her about the scenes and circumstances and incidents of her journey from Paris to the town where he is staying, Shelley enjoins Harriett 'not to part with any of her money' (words implying that he knows her to be in possession of a considerable sum), and bids her bring with her to Switzerland the two deeds which

Tahourdin has been instructed to prepare for her. The settlement may have been a deed for her pecuniary benefit. The other two deeds may have been duplicates of an instrument, defining the terms of their separation, to which (I think) she may be regarded as having assented (in a legal sense) before Shelley left England. Thus Shelley wrote from Troyes to his wife, whom he hoped soon to have the pleasure of welcoming to some sweet retreat in the Swiss mountains.

By the writer of the well-known *Edinburgh* 'Shelley and Mary' article, it is remarked of this letter,—

'It is difficult to conceive anything more wild and impracticable—the more so as Shelley himself, travelling with another woman who was not his wife, invites his wife in terms of endearment to join him in Switzerland, which he had not reached, and where he was not going to stay. It is the scheme of a reckless child.'

Because this curious, scrambling tour, covered only forty-seven days, is it so certain that Shelley left England without any intention of remaining abroad for a longer period? Because he spent only ten days in Switzerland, does it follow that on the 13th of August he was going there *for* no longer time? I venture to differ from the *Edinburgh* writer. Taken by itself the letter is evidence, that on the 13th of August, Shelley hoped to make a sojourn of several months in Switzerland. Had he at that time intended to scamper into and out of the little Republic, after spending ten days within its bounds, he would scarcely (harum-scarum creature though he was) have entreated Harriett to come out to him. But there is other evidence that he hoped to be away from England for a longer time. The *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* abounds with indications that at the outset the tour was meant to cover several months instead of a few weeks. Leaving England with only a little money in his pocket, even Shelley would not have spent it so lavishly in posting from Calais, had he not hoped to find an abundant remittance for him at Paris. Instead of awaiting his arrival at the capital, the remittance did not come till he had waited for it several days, 'in a kind of imprisonment.' When it came the trio were disappointed by its smallness. Indicated by the epithet applied to the sum in the diary, this disappointment is revealed yet more fully by the fact that the smallness of the sum caused the trio immediately to alter their plans, and on the spur of the moment devise a scheme for a cheap walking-tour. Had they expected

no more than 60*l.* they would have laid their plans for the cheap expedition on foot, whilst enduring the 'kind of imprisonment.' Between Troyes and Uri they were compelled to spend money much faster than they intended to spend it; a series of small and unforeseen misadventures diminishing the resources, which would otherwise have enabled them to stay longer in the country, where they hoped to make a temporary home. It is clear from the diary, that on the road from Troyes to Switzerland, they looked forward to Neufchatel as a place, where they would possibly find another remittance. Even on the 20th of August, after getting the 38*l.* in silver from the Neufchatel banker who afforded them relief, so far were they from thinking of a speedy return to England, that they 'resolved to journey towards the lake of Uri, and seek in that romantic and interesting country some cottage where they might dwell in peace and solitude.' In their account of the circumstances which compelled them to relinquish this delightful scheme, the diarists say, 'Such were our dreams, which we should probably have realised, had it not been for the deficiency of that indispensable article—money, which obliged us to return to England.' Even on the 26th of August, when they determine to run home as quickly and cheaply as possible on their remaining 28*l.*, they are clinging to a hope of money from some uncertain source. 'The 28*l.* which we possessed,' they say, 'was all the money that we could count upon *with any certainty* until the following December.' Hence there is less reason for astonishment, than the *Edinburgh* Reviewer imagined, in the poet's sufficiently staggering proposal to the 'noble animal,' who could neither 'feel poetry' nor 'understand philosophy.'

Shelley having turned lame, Mary having failed from weakness, and Claire having had enough of trudging along hot roads, the remainder of the 'Six Weeks' Tour' was made on wheels or by water. Selling their mule and saddle (at a sacrifice of several Napoleons) at Troyes, where they bought a four-wheeled vehicle for five Napoleons, and making a bad bargain with the impudent peasant, who agreed to convey them and their carriage with his own mule to Neufchatel, they pushed onwards to Switzerland, where they arrived, after a series of exasperating misadventures, to discover that enthusiasts for liberty may be exceedingly uncomfortable, though living within view of William Tell's Chapel, and to discover at the end of

ten days that, to escape absolute want, they had better hasten back to England. Taking the *diligence par eau* at Lucerne, they made their way in uncongenial company along the Reuss to Loffenberg, pushed onwards in a leaky canoe to Mumph, and passed through divers discomforts *en route* from Mumph to Basle. Leaving the Rhine at Bonn, they posted to Cologne, travelled by diligence to Cleves, and posted to Rotterdam. Detained by contrary winds for nearly two days at Marsluys, they had ample time for spending their last guinea at that scarcely genial place, whilst

‘reflecting with wonder that they had travelled eight hundred miles for less than thirty pounds, passing through lovely scenes, and enjoying the beauteous Rhine, and all the brilliant shows of earth and sky, perhaps more, travelling as they did, in an open boat, than if they had been shut up in a carriage, and passed on the road under the hills.’

On the third day after clearing away from Marsluys, they landed at Gravesend on the morning of the 13th of September, cold and miserably exhausted by an unusually rough passage.


Cheap touring now-a-days is more rough than nice. Seventy years since it was unutterably nasty. To realize what Shelley and the girls endured in their cheap and nasty tour, is to see our grandfathers and grandmothers did well to stay at home, when they could not afford to travel luxuriously. Journeying in the easiest carriages, sailing in the least crowded boats, resting at the best hotels, wealthy tourists had to endure no little rough usage and discomfort. But it makes the flesh creep to think how the poet, and Mary, and Claire, fared during the most disagreeable passages of their first Swiss trip. Eating coarse food they were often compelled to eat it in the company of quarrelsome peasants, heavy with drink and stinking of garlic. Even when they were not verminous, the beds offered to their weary limbs were comfortless and unalluring. More than once they remained all night in the open air rather than repose on the squalid couches of their inn’s worst room. At least on one occasion the hostess of a rural tavern told them that if they would go to bed, they must be content to do so in the same chamber as their coachman. At Brunen, on the lake of Lucerne, where they made a brief and feeble effort to settle, the best quarters they could get consisted of two unfurnished rooms in an old, ugly, and dilapidated chateau. The season was cold and rainy; and when they lit a fire in their living room, the big

stove emitted so unwholesome and stifling a warmth, they were forced to throw open the windows to the bleak and penetrating wind.

In compensation for serious and sometimes disgusting discomforts, they experienced those excitements that are enjoyed in the highest degree only by young, hopeful, and imaginative tourists, moving through new scenes of surpassing loveliness. From the Alps and the German vineyards, the Swiss lakes and the glorious Rhine, Shelley returned to England with memories, to which we are indebted for much of the finest poetry of *Alastor*. Ever and again, too, in the pages of the *Six Weeks' Tour*, the tourists are seen in the enjoyment of pleasures that, instead of being derived from the surrounding scenery, were only heightened by the influence of its beauties. On their passage, in a boat laden with merchandise, from Basle to Mayence, whilst the sun shone pleasantly, Shelley read Mary Wollstonecraft's *Letters from Norway* to the girls, who listened with delight to a book that was new literature to them.

Landing at Gravesend without three halfpence in their pockets, and leaving Gravesend in debt to the captain of the vessel that had brought them from Holland, the trio made their way back to London. It was a doleful return for the two girls, neither of whom had courage or inclination to go to the home, from which they had fled so shamefully less than seven weeks since. As though it were a matter about which his readers might be doubtful, Mr. Kegan Paul is at pains to record, that, 'Godwin's irritation and displeasure at the step his daughter had taken were extreme.' 'Irritation' and 'displeasure' are no terms to describe the veteran's indignation at the young man who, after eating his bread and salt, and affecting for successive years to sit meekly at his feet, in the character of an idolizing and grateful disciple, had seduced his only daughter. Let there be an end of the dishonest endeavours to gloss the blackest business of Shelley's life into a venial indiscretion, to colour and tone it into a pretty piece of domestic romance. Truth and morality require that this spade should be called by no other name.

It is noteworthy that the persons who have displayed the most zeal and ingenuity in glossing and colouring Shelley's seduction of Mary Godwin into a romantic and innocent love-passage, are the very persons who have been most ostentatious



of their righteous indignation and disgust at Byron's profligacy. In my *Real Lord Byron* I gave due prominence (some of my critics thought me guilty of giving excessive prominence) to his successive acts of libertinism. But I know of nothing in the whole record of Byron's profligacies, that is comparable for deceit and treachery with Shelley's course of action to his familiar friend's daughter. Had Byron acted towards the daughter of any one of his intimate friends precisely as Shelley acted to Mary Godwin, what a noise the Shelleyan enthusiasts would have made about his treacherous profligacy!

In dealing with Shelley's conduct to his familiar friend's sixteen-years-old daughter, the Shelleyan Socialists will not touch the questions at issue, by urging that he was unhappy with his wife; by showing that he had good (*even the gravest*) reasons for dissatisfaction with her; or by arguing that good and wise men have distinguished themselves by benevolence to their species, and laboured with eminent advantage to their fellow-creatures, whilst associating conjugally with women who were not their wives. Every one knows that men of exemplary beneficence, whose services to their species are commemorated in the brightest pages of its history, have lived amiably and usefully in the closest domestic union with women to whom they were not lawfully wedded. The question is not whether or no, after discovering real cause for quarrel with his wife, and finding himself unable to live happily with her, he would, after a considerable lapse of time, have been justified in going to a woman (already in the maturity of intellect and of years) and saying to her, 'I made, in my boyhood, a miserable marriage, from which I cannot get legal release. You know every particular of my story; nothing of it has been withheld from you. Your age and your experience qualify you to estimate the nature, and magnitude, and consequences of the sacrifice I ask of you. As far as any woman can be in such a position, you are in a position to justify you in ministering to my happiness, in contravention of human laws and social sentiment. My prayer is that you may love me as I love you, and will grant me all that my love requires of you. But in consideration of the enormity of the sacrifice you will make of your interests in yielding to my prayer, I cannot allow you to consent impulsively, but beg you to ponder my proposal with all possible calmness before you answer.' The question is not raised whether

or no Shelley, some ten or twenty years after his complete separation from Harriett, might have spoken in this way to a woman some thirty years of age.

Nor will the Shelleyan apologists touch the main question by repeating one of their favourite pleas in Shelley's behalf, viz., that, if he was wrong in stealthily carrying off his friend's child, he believed himself quite right in doing so. It is curious that the lady, who in her girlhood was thus dealt with by her future husband, should have been the originator of the extraordinary plea. In her note to *Alastor*, Mrs. Shelley remarks of her husband, that 'in all he did, he, at the time of doing it, believed himself justified to his own conscience.' What makes this curious plea especially deserving of notice is its truth. As soon as Shelley wished to do a thing, it was manifest to him that he had a right to do it; and having done the thing (however wrong it might be), he could commend himself for virtue in having done it. Peacock tells a curious story, that may be repeated in illustration of Shelley's readiness to discover a good motive, to justify anything he had a humour to do. One fine day in the early summer (probably of 1815), the two friends were walking through a village where there was a good vicarage-house, whose front wall was covered with corchorus in full bloom. In his delight at the pleasant house and garden, and the picturesque church near at hand, Shelley remarked seriously, 'I feel strongly inclined to enter the church.'

'What,' said Peacock, 'to become a clergyman, with your ideas of the faith?'

Instead of admitting that a man of his views would be a miserable impostor to take orders for the sake of a good benefice, Shelley answered, 'Assent to the supernatural part of it is merely technical. Of the moral doctrines of Christianity I am a more decided example than many of its more ostentatious professors. And consider for a moment how much good a good clergyman can do. . . . It is an admirable institution that admits the possibility of diffusing such men over the surface of the land. And am I to deprive myself of the advantages of this admirable institution, because there are certain technicalities to which I cannot give my adhesion, but I need not bring prominently forward?'

This notion of entering the church was nothing more than a passing fancy; but with Shelley to entertain the notion was

to discover virtuous reasons for acting on the immoral fancy. All through life Shelley thought of himself and his doings in this self-justificatory fashion. Whatever he said or did was right to be said and done. In a former chapter it has been remarked how Shelley resembled Byron in being a sentimental egotist; and how the egotism of the one poet differed from the egotism of the other. Whilst it delighted Byron to figure as the man of sin, Shelley sided with angels and asked the world to worship him for his celestial qualities. Whilst Byron delighted in painting himself blacker than he was, Shelley never wearied of proclaiming himself a creature of angelic purity and whiteness. Both were actors desirous of being mistaken for the characters they assumed; each of them having selected his part in obedience to his natural disposition; Byron wishing to be thought romantically wicked, because wickedness had a fascination for him, whilst Shelley wished to be thought romantically virtuous, because he had a genuine preference for goodness.

Insincere on the surface, the affectation of either poet had its source in sincerity. In some respects Byron's affectation was the more piquant, from being so much more unusual than Shelley's affectation. Whilst Shelley's affectation was commonplace hypocrisy, expressing itself in the finest figures of poetry, Byron's hypocrisy was so much out of the ordinary course of things as to be almost unique. Harness designated it 'hypocrisy reversed.' It was hypocrisy turned inside out. And anything, from a philosopher's argument to a fop's dress suit, on being turned inside out, is for a while more attractive and entertaining than when it is displayed in the usual and proper way. To hear a man credit himself with virtues he does not possess, one has only to stand with open ears at the corner of any market, where people are noisily employed in over-reaching one another. But it is rare, and because rare it is amusing and piquant, to find a man chiefly desirous of persuading his neighbours that he is a very much worse man than he really is. England will hold her own amongst the nations of the earth for several centuries, without producing another great poet so enamoured and ambitious as Byron was of evil fame; but every generation of her past or future story has produced, or will produce, a poet with Shelley's disposition to think and speak too well of himself. It may, however, be questioned whether England will, in

the coming time, ever produce a poet so supremely great in his art, and at the time so supremely self-righteous as the author of *Laon and Cythna*.

It is not surprising that William Godwin could not recognize a possible Saviour of the World in his daughter's captor. It is not surprising that for some time he refused to speak with Shelley, or to correspond with him, except through a solicitor. The worm turns when it is trodden upon. Even a philosopher may be excused for showing he participates in the infirmities of 'the slavish multitude,' when the young man he has cherished affectionately repays his kindness by bringing his only daughter to shame. It is not surprising that, to the hour of the poet's death, Godwin thought of him bitterly and resentfully as an evil man. Even to his daughter, after he had taken her back to his heart, the poor author and struggling bookseller never disguised from her his low opinion of the man who in undue course became his son-in-law. Writing to her on 9th September, 1819, he said, 'What is it you want that you have not? You have the husband of your choice, to whom you are unalterably attached, a man of high intellectual attainments, *whatsoever I, and some other persons*, may think of his morality, and the defects under this last head, if they be not (as you seem to think) imaginary, at least do not operate as towards you.' From these words, written to his child about her husband, it may be inferred what Godwin thought of his son-in-law's morals, and said of them to people less sensitive than Mary for the poet's honour, and less entitled to the old man's consideration. So much has been written gushingly about the sweetness of Shelley's temper, it is well to observe that Godwin (who may be supposed to have known it better than any of the poet's eulogists) wrote to his wife on 14th May, 1817, 'I knew that Shelley's temper was occasionally fiery, resentful and indignant!'

No doubt, Shelley in later time helped Godwin on several occasions with money. It even appears that in the winter of 1814-15, whilst Godwin was holding to his purpose of having no renewal of friendly intercourse with him, Shelley, in the midst of urgent embarrassments, managed to borrow 90*l.*, which was sent to the relief of the old man, who was in financial distress. As the moneys with which he at divers times saved Mary's father from bankruptcy, were for the most part, if not altogether,

obtained from money-lenders on post-obits or on loans at heavy interest, charged on the estates A and B, the amount for which Shelley rendered himself liable for Godwin's advantage greatly exceeded the sum that came to the veteran from his son-in-law. The smaller of the two sums was, however, a large one. One could wish, for his credit's sake, that Godwin had never yielded to necessity so far as to take a single guinea from his daughter's husband. It would be easier to respect the veteran had he surrendered his stock to his creditors, and lived again at the point of pen, rather than take money from the man who led Mary from the way of womanly duty. But Godwin was now growing old ; his powers and spirit were failing ; and there is nothing so likely as financial distress to deaden a man's sense of honour. Under that demoralizing distress, poor Godwin deteriorated lamentably. Several considerations may, however, be urged in palliation of the incidents that exposed him to the charge of receiving pecuniary compensation for loss of honour. He had a wife and a young son still upon his hands ; the character of his business encouraged him to hope that even yet it would prove more remunerative ; and the money he should not have accepted, may well have seemed to him to come not so much from his son-in-law as from his prosperous daughter. He may well have felt that in refusing to be helped by her, he should be reminding her ungenerously of what was shameful in her ability to help him. In considering these pecuniary transactions, readers should make an effort to dismiss Shelley from their minds, and as far as possible think only of the father and daughter.

On returning to London from the six weeks' tour, Shelley lost no time in calling on his wife, who, by receiving his visit, may be said to have justified Mary Godwin in remarking in her diary, that Harriett was 'certainly a very odd creature.' This visit to Harriett is said to have been paid by Shelley on the day following his arrival at Gravesend ; and as Harriett was at that time living under her father's roof in Chapel Street, the fair presumption (in the absence of direct evidence to the contrary) is that the husband and wife saw one another at her father's house. It is also certain that in several ensuing months Shelley not only displayed a desire to live on a friendly footing with Harriett, but that she consented to his desire so far as to allow him to call upon her, and in divers ways to make arrangements

for her comfort. Whether Mary Godwin called on Harriett does not appear; but from an entry of her diary, it is obvious she was disposed to do so. It is scarcely conceivable (though strange things are conceivable of the Shelleys) that the project for calling on her would have been seriously entertained until Harriett's feelings had been, at least, sounded by Shelley, in order to discover whether it would be agreeable to his wife to receive a call from his mistress. If the visit was paid, and, moreover, paid to, and received by, Harriett under her father's roof, the affair involved a curious position, and showed that the Westbrooks resembled the poet in disregard of conventional propriety. That the intercourse, which certainly took place at this period between Shelley and Harriett, was fruitful of much enjoyment to either of them is not to be imagined. Some of their interviews were by no means agreeable to the sensibilities of the young husband, who on returning from one of them (an interview that is *said* to have taken place on the day following that of the birth of Harriett's son), complained bitterly to Mary of Harriett's demeanour to him. Possibly the mother of Shelley's heir was not without materials for a countercharge of the same nature against the young poet, whom she had just presented with an heir to the Castle Goring baronetcy. Anyhow, excuses may be made for the young wife and mother (still only nineteen years of age), should she be proved to have spoken tartly to the young husband, who had come straight from his mistress's lodgings to congratulate her on so interesting an occasion. The matter of chief importance about these interviews is, that they were made: that Shelley paid and Harriett received the visits,—a fact fully justifying certain of Shelley's biographers in averring that she assented to his withdrawal from her bed, and that the separation was an affair of mutual consent. Under these circumstances, as I have already remarked, to produce a regular deed of separation would not be to give a new colour to the arrangement.

There is some uncertainty as to the precise date of Charles Bysshe Shelley's birth. As the matter is of slight or no importance, I have not been at much pains to ascertain the very day on which Shelley's son by Harriett was born. Writing from the Field Place MSS., the writer of the *Edinburgh*, 'Shelley and Mary' article, says that the poet's first-born son was born 'about December 1st,'—a statement following imme-

diately upon the writer's testimony that, according to Mary Godwin's diary, Harriett left her father's house on the 20th of October preceding her accouchement; and that, on so leaving her father's house, she went to some place alike unknown to both keepers of the joint-diary. Anyhow, there is small reason for doubt that the boy was born in his maternal grandfather's house in Chapel Street. To this point, Miss Westbrook (in her second affidavit in the memorable proceedings in Chancery, dated 13th January, 1817) speaks precisely. Affidavits are sometimes loosely drawn; but it is in the highest degree improbable that Miss Westbrook would have signed under oath a statement that her nephew was born in her father's house, and her own home, unless she remembered him to have been born there. It is no less improbable that Miss Westbrook's memory could have betrayed her on such a point. Consequently, *if* Harriett's boy by Shelley was born about 1st December, 1814 (as the Field Place evidences are said to show), and *if* (as the same evidences are said to show) Harriett left her father's house on the previous 20th October, 1814, she must have returned to her old home in Chapel Street on some day before the birth of her son.

Whilst he was rendering scarcely acceptable civilities to his wife, Shelley was not without sentimental embarrassments in the lodgings where he was living with Mary and Claire,—embarrassments arising chiefly from Claire's inability to concur with him respecting the proper limits of his affectionateness for her. The bright, witty, vivacious girl, who had favoured and furthered his suit to Mary, and, deserting her mother, had decided to share the fortunes of the two Free Lovers, saw much to disapprove, and something to resent, in Shelley's purpose to treat her merely as a friend who had rendered him sisterly service. It does not appear from the record in what particulars Claire felt herself aggrieved; and in the absence of definite information, readers must be left to imagine her grounds for discontent with Percy's treatment of her. The lady so recently initiated into the principles of Free Love, may possibly have conceived that its freedom should be limitless. If she was guilty of so great a mistake, it may be pleaded in her excuse that she had been carried somewhat too quickly through a course of reading, not unlikely to fill her young mind with wild and preposterous imaginations. In justice to this girl

of seventeen summers, it should be remembered that in the autumn of 1814 she had been for some months drinking deeply and incessantly of a new and perilous philosophy. The sharer of her sister's training for the higher life, Claire had studied *Queen Mab* with its Notes, perused Mary Wollstonecraft's delightful letters to Gilbert Imlay, pondered William Godwin's arguments against marriage, and enlarged her views of life by earnest application to the Chevalier Lawrence's elegant work on *The Empire of the Nairs*. Sure evidence exists that, in the summer and early autumn, all this stimulating and wildly delusive literature was offered to the consideration of the two sisters; and it cannot be doubted that, whenever they needed larger enlightenment and more exact guidance on questions rising from the texts of the various authors, the girls carried their difficulties to a tutor who was only too happy to give them more precise instruction. There is no lack of evidence that Shelley and the girls went together through this disturbing literature. In a few months the girls had learnt why chastity should be deemed a monkish superstition; why conjugal constancy ceases to be virtuous when it ceases to be agreeable; why love should be lawless. Is it strange that the instruction afforded to Claire during her passage through such literature, not only by the books themselves, but also by the more exciting than wholesome conversations arising from them, was fruitful of misconceptions and wild fancies in her ardent brain? Mr. Froude is of opinion that by thus declaring her approval of 'community of women,' Claire 'scandalized even Shelley himself,' and proved herself a phenomenally impure and vicious girl. To me, on the contrary, the declaration of so repulsive a sentiment only shows how greatly Claire was mentally disturbed and morally injured, at least for the moment, by the literature and vein of thought to which Shelley had introduced her.

Was a young man ever in a stranger complication of sentimental embarrassments than Shelley, living in lodgings with a mistress to whom he was passionately attached, and her sister so incapable of mere friendship, whilst he was paying visits of affectionate courtesy to his young wife on the point of giving birth to his first-born son, or already dandling the little one in her arms? Whatever the uncertainty respecting his feelings for Harriett, the position of affairs at his lodgings is clearly defined. Whilst he would fain cherish Claire with tender and affectionate

friendship, she requires more than friendship of him. On finding that Claire requires more of his consideration and sympathy than fidelity to the girl who has sacrificed her honour for his happiness will allow him to give her, he retires into his sentimental shell, in respect to the girl of southern complexion and Italian fervour, resolving for the future to bear himself towards her with circumspection, reserve, and even coldness. Aware of Claire's extravagant desire and pretensions, Mary is of course on Shelley's side and encourages him to persist in the attitude, which, of course, appears to her most favourable to domestic virtue. Being in possession of his heart, she, of course, has no wish to share it with Claire, and resents Claire's claim for a part of it as unendurable presumption.

Had Mary been in Claire's place, and Claire in her sister's position, it is possible Mary would have been guilty of Claire's egregious misconceptions, and Claire would have been on the side of domestic virtue. But having all she wanted Mary was preserved from the erroneous conclusions, to which new and exciting literature had reduced her sister-by-affinity. Possessing Percy's undivided love Mary was saved from Claire's painful misconceptions by a natural selfishness,—the vice that so often renders virtue efficient service. This was the position at Percy's lodgings,—a position that, promising much sentimental disturbance and successive outbreaks of emotional energy, in due course fulfilled the promise.

CHAPTER IX.

BISHOPGATE.

Pecuniary Difficulties and Resources—Choice of a Profession—Shelley walking a Hospital—Dropt by Acquaintances—Birth of Mary Godwin's first Child—Sir Bysshe Shelley's Death—Differences and Tiffs between Mary and Claire—Characteristics of the Sisters—Trip to South Devon—At Work on *Alastor*—Publication of the Poem—*Essay on Christianity*—Life at Bishopgate—Shelley's Idolatry of Byron—Birth of Mary Godwin's first-born Son—Claire and Byron—Second Trip to Switzerland—Shelley's Pretext for leaving England—Strange Scene between Shelley and Peacock—Semi-Delusions—Another Hallucination.

So much fantastic stuff has been written about Shelley's poverty at manhood's threshold, and the sufferings which came to him from his father's cruel parsimony, that it is well to observe he never made a close and enduring acquaintance with the penury, which has nursed so many rhymesters into poets of deathless song. Poverty is of course a comparative term. In the story of Shelley's career it must be construed as little more than a figure of speech. In Poland Street he was supplied bountifully with money by relatives and other friends. From the date of the arrangement, to which the Squire was a party not long after his boy's expulsion from Oxford, he enjoyed a sufficient and even liberal allowance, till he ran off to Scotland with Harriett; and from the day of the elopement till the moment of his withdrawal from his first wife he had an adequate income, and the means of living far beyond it. Between 28th July and 13th September, 1814, he spent (in ready money) 98*l.*, besides the money with which he journeyed from London to Calais and posted from Calais to Paris. The young man who spent money at this rate, like most other outrunners of the constable, was often without money in hand for the requirements of his wasteful career,—often without a guinea in his pocket. But it is absurd to assign to poverty the immediate results of habitual prodigality. If he ever suffered from what can be fairly styled poverty, the brief experience belonged to the period between his return from the Continent in September, 1814, and the early

month of the ensuing year, when by accepting the easy terms offered to him by his father with the Duke of Norfolk's approval, he stepped into a clear revenue of 1000*l.* a-year. In compliance with the arrangement which afforded him this assured allowance during his father's life, the poet surrendered only a small portion of his interest in the settled estates, A and B.

At divers times between September, 1814, and the arrangement which afforded him a thousand a-year, Shelley doubtless endured numerous annoyances and humiliations from want of money. Once and again he was tracked by bailiffs; and as often he was constrained to keep away from his lodgings and conceal himself from the emissaries of the law. There were days together during which he and Mary could safely meet one another only by appointment at places away from her abode. But even at these hard times he could raise money for his immediate necessities, albeit at heavy rates of interest. The poet, who in the time of his most urgent need of money could give Mary Godwin 90*l.* for the mitigation of her father's pecuniary distress, knew nothing of biting penury, little of vexatious poverty, even when his difficulties were at their worst. Still it cannot be questioned that in the winter of 1814-15, Shelley was so sensibly touched by pecuniary trouble as to awake from the golden dreams which had so long given him a delusive view of his financial position, and to think he should in common prudence qualify himself to earn his living in one of the liberal professions.

By this time his debts were no less considerable than harassing; and he had discovered that no sum he could raise in the money-market on his expectations would satisfy the demands of his numerous creditors, and afford a surplus sufficient for his maintenance in scholarly idleness. In the previous spring a lawyer, whom he had consulted on the state of his affairs, described him in a professional letter as having 'used the utmost of his endeavours to raise money for the payment of his debts, *without success.*' Having vainly tried to raise enough money for the mere payment of his debts, he may well have despaired to raise enough for the satisfaction of his creditors, and his own subsistence to the end of his days. Under these circumstances, it was natural for him to think of choosing a profession. Which of the professions should he enter? The Church? the Bar? or Medicine? The notion of taking holy orders and seeking the

needful morsel of bread in a parsonage, covered with corchorus in full flower, was only a passing fancy. For the law, of which he knew nothing, he had a poet's natural aversion. The army was out of the question to the sentimentalist, who regarded war with abhorrence, and rated soldiers with murderers. Not because he had any natural aptitude or inclination for the calling, but chiefly because it was less distasteful to him than any other vocation by which he could win his daily bread without disgrace, and in a slight degree because some of his forefathers, and several of his near kindred, had followed, or were following it, Shelley thought of qualifying himself for service in the vocation, by which his great-grandfather had prospered in America before marrying the widow Plum. In this selection of a calling he may also have been influenced by his cousins, the Groves, a family of doctors.

To guard him from a suspicion of being actuated in this matter by purely selfish motives, and to account in an elegant manner for his choice of a profession, which, though sufficiently honourable for persons of undistinguished lineage, is seldom followed by gentlemen of high ancestral dignity, successive biographers have represented that, in deciding to become an apothecary and surgeon, he was moved chiefly by concern for the interests of the poor. Indeed, Lady Shelley insists that her husband's father was governed wholly in this matter by benevolent considerations. 'In the winter months at the commencement of this year,' she says, 'Shelley walked a hospital for the purpose of acquiring some slight knowledge of surgery, which might enable him to alleviate the sufferings of the poor.' It makes, however, against this elegant apology for the poet's condescension to medicine, that on coming into an assured income of 1000*l.* a-year he ceased to walk his hospital.*

Instead of coming to him from poverty, Shelley's keenest annoyances in the winter of 1814-15 came to him from the coldness of persons who, after courting him in the summer and autumn of 1813, made it clear they no longer wished for his

* It should be borne in mind that had he persevered in his design of following medicine, the expelled Oxonian could not have gained an M.D. degree in England. The member of a medical family, with cousins following medicine under different qualifications, Shelley was of course aware that, though he might take the diplomas of the College of Surgeons and the Apothecaries' Hall, he could not as a mere London medical student become 'a physician.'

acquaintance. 'Some of his few friends,' says Peacock, 'of the preceding year had certainly at that time fallen off from him.' Ladies, who had compared him to a rose drenched with rain, and a bird rejoicing in the sunshine, now thought less favourably of him. Instead of running after him for sweet converse touching the perfectibility of the species, they spoke of him as a very bad young man, who had treated his charming little wife most cruelly and shamefully, and in other ways proved himself a monster. Because it amuses gentlewomen to listen in a drawing-room to a young poet's eloquent exhibitions of his daring and delightful and original views about society, and the affections, and 'all that sort of thing,' it does not follow that they will care to flutter about him and smile upon him, when he has acted on his startling and charming theories. Talk that is piquant and innocent, from the lips of a young gentleman who is living virtuously with a charming little wife, strikes gentle listeners as superlatively shocking and offensive, from a young man who is known to have transferred his affections from the charming little wife to a young lady who isn't his wife. However much he was pained and astonished by her altered demeanour, Maimuna may be pardoned for declining to call on Miss Mary Godwin. Had she not a daughter and grandchildren (to say nothing of her character in Pimlico) to think for? So Shelley was dropt by the Boinvilles and Newtons, and other no less charming and exemplary people, whilst he lived with Mary and Claire in lodgings, where the trio—shut out from the Skinner-Street house, and avoided by all the members of William Godwin's 'set'—seldom had a call from any one but Peacock and Hogg.

One of the incidents of this troublous and vexatious period was the birth of Mary Godwin's first child,—a seven months' girl, who drawing her first breath on 20th February, 1815, breathed her last a few days later. The infant's premature appearance was of course fruitful of scandalous gossip, which in the total absence of justificatory evidence may be dismissed as mere gossip. Mary's earliest issue was, no doubt, a seven months' child.

Enough has been said of the will, with its momentous codicil, of Sir Bysshe Shelley, Bart., who died on 6th January, 1815, in his eighty-fourth year. Enough also has been said of the way in which the poet disinherited himself and his issue out of the

large entailed estate created by that will. Henceforth, in regarding the poet's financial position, readers must think of him as a man with an assured income of 1000*l.* during his father's life, and a vested interest in the fee-simple of estates A and B on the extinction of his father's life-interest in them, *minus* the portion of his interest in the same estates, which he surrendered to his father in consideration of the 1000*l.* a-year assured to him during his father's life.

It is not to be supposed that after taking Claire and Mary through Miss Wollstonecraft's *Letters to Imlay*, and Sir James Lawrence's *Empire of the Nairs*, and showing them why chastity was a mere monkish superstition and conjugal constancy a mere matter of expedience, which on ceasing to be expedient became actually vicious, Shelley was so greatly scandalized, as Mr. Froude imagines, by Claire's sprightly talk about 'community of women.' Nor is it to be imagined that Mary was so profoundly shocked and deeply disgusted as the same historian fancies by her fellow-pupil's misconceptions respecting a state of human society, that necessarily came under their consideration in the course of study and discussion through which Percy was taking them. In October, 1814, Mary had for several months been undergoing an education, that saved her from all acutely painful emotions of horror and repugnance at her class-mate's equally erroneous and ridiculous conclusions. Possibly Mary's diary contains some edifying memoranda, capable of being used as evidence that she regarded Claire as wild, even to wickedness, on one or two subjects that rarely come under the cognizance of English girls or even of English matrons; but such entries of the joint-journal should be read and construed with reference to Mary's familiarity with such topics, and also with reference to the multifarious incidents and circumstances that had resulted in her enlightenment on matters, about which both girls should have been kept in darkness.

None the less certain, however, is it that on coming in October, 1814, to differences of sentiment on a decidedly unsavoury question, Claire and Mary had a cause of disagreement which, passionately as they had loved one another in former time (transient tiffs notwithstanding), could scarcely fail to engender the friction and heat of lively discord between them. Differing greatly in personal appearance, these sisters of about

the same age and the same training, were alike remarkable for intellectual and moral characteristics that, under any circumstances, would have caused them to clash and quarrel at times, even whilst strongly attached to one another in their hearts. In some particulars of outward show, each of these charming and sadly misguided girls had the advantage of the other. Together with an intellectuality of expression, differing from, but in no degree inferior to, the mental expressiveness of Claire's countenance, Mary the Blonde (albeit with eyes more brown than blue) had a singularly lovely profile, and finely moulded features, that gave her, in respect to facial contour and shapeliness, manifest and unquestionable superiority over her sister-by-affinity. Though not absolutely defective in stature (indeed one of Godwin's letters describes her as though she were tall), Mary lacked the full height requisite for personal impressiveness; but her figure, good even in girlhood, developed in her maturity into the exuberant loveliness of antique sculpture. On the other hand, Claire the Brown had a tall, lissom figure of matchless elegance; a figure which, though striking beholders at first sight as chiefly remarkable for delicacy and slightness, was seen at a second glance to be in no degree wanting in the developments that are requisite for female attractiveness. Small at the waist and long-necked, Claire had perfectly fashioned shoulders and arms, tiny hands, and feet minute and nimble enough to have won Sir John Suckling's approval. The worst feature of her face was a nose that resembled Shelley's in being tip-tilted; but she had the shapely mouth that is never seen apart from cleverness, pink lips, white teeth, and dark eyes that shone soft as sunshine through their long lashes when she was in a good temper, but flashed with a terrifying vehemence when she was whipt to fury by a cruel tongue. Whilst the colour of Mary's hair accorded with her complexion, Claire had a wealth of darksome tresses. In aspect and air Mary was piquant, lovely, and good; Claire, brilliant, distinguished, and dangerous.

Both girls were hot-tempered, peevish, and resentful, as well as vehemently affectionate; Mary animated with the fervour and captiousness of her mother's stock, whilst Claire was as impetuous and unruly as any girl of southern blood ripened by southern suns. Both girls were quick-witted, imaginative, and ambitious. Reared during their earlier childhood in Somers

Town, discovered by Shelley in the rooms over the Skinner-Street shop, they were both fashioned to make a figure in the world ; and even in the nursery, where Shelley may be said to have found them, they conceived the design of making themselves personages of celebrity. Slovens so long as they were poor, they developed a taste for dress and personal display as soon as they were rich enough to wear silk and velvet. Under favourable circumstances (never granted to either of them) Mary would have developed into a good and greatly useful woman ; Claire into a generous and powerful, though possibly mischievous, woman. Under such circumstances, Mary would have been precisely conscientious and as truthful as sunshine (which she certainly was not in her later time), but Claire would all the same have been something of a schemer and an *intriguante*, and have valued propitious fortune chiefly on account of the greater power it afforded her for playing with men and women, as though they were mere cards and counters. Each of these girls, predestined to embittering disappointment by the malicious fate that for a brief hour stirred them both with a sense of dazzling success, numbered amongst their social endowments a degree of colloquial piquancy and conversational address that, in the absence of all her other natural excellencies, would have given her the advantage over ordinary women. Whilst Mary's sparkling gossip sometimes smiled with humour (according to Thackeray a rare faculty in woman), Claire's higher raillery smacked of the satire that, under the spur of anger, rolled in torrents of scornful irony from her writhing lips. The time was coming when Byron whitened and trembled under her scathing sarcasm. But Claire's voice was made for better work than cruel speech. Music was her chief accomplishment ; and whilst figuring creditably amongst professional performers as an instrumentalist, she only just missed the vocal excellence that would have enabled her to achieve her ambition to be an operatic singer. That she became so bright and vivid a force in Florentine drawing-rooms during Shelley's later years, and after his death, was in no small degree owing to his admiration of her noble voice, and the care he took to provide her with good musical instruction whilst she lived with him and Mary at Marlow and in Italy.

It is not surprising that after living together for seven months, Claire and Mary determined to dwell apart. In truth

the reasons why they should not cohabit (to use one of Godwin's favourite words) were so numerous and weighty that nothing but the strength of the mutual affection, underlying their mutual jealousies and emotional discrepancies of sentiment, will account for the long postponement of the outbreak of temper on either side that, in the spring of 1815, severed them for awhile. A young married woman usually likes to have her home to herself and her husband, and though she was not Shelley's wife it was natural for Mary to rate herself as his wife, and all the more for the peculiarity of her alliance with him to wish for the full measure of the domestic privacy, to which a wife is entitled. Mary was too well acquainted with the troubles arising from Miss Westbrook's permanent residence with Percy and Harriett, not to fear that similar troubles might ensue to him and herself should Claire be always with them. She was the more desirous for Claire to leave them to themselves, because, though she had no doubt of the strength and completeness of Shelley's attachment to herself, she could not blind herself to his admiration of and liking for Claire,—an admiration and liking that influenced him to the day of his death, although his affection for her was sometimes sorely tried by Claire's waywardness and freakish impetuosity. At the same time, though the witty and vivacious girl amused and delighted him even when she was most perverse and unmanageable, Shelley had in former times suffered too much from a sister-in-law's influence and continual presence at his hearth, not to shrink from the thought of having another sister-in-law incessantly on his hands. Hence it came to pass that, on 11th March, 1815, Mary wrote in her diary,—

'March 11th, 1815.—Talk about Claire's going away. Nothing settled. I fear it is hopeless; she will not go to Skinner Street. Thus our house, I see plainly, is the only remaining place—what is to be done?'

Two months later, after numerous tiffs and interchanges of sarcastic speech, the two hot-tempered sisters parted for awhile, not more to the relief and contentment of the one than of the other, Claire taking up her abode in a solitary cottage (presumably on an allowance made by Shelley), whilst her sister and the poet entered on the enjoyment of the furnished house at Bishopgate (the eastern entrance of Windsor Park) that

was their usual place of abode from the summer of 1815 to the early summer (or, to speak more precisely, the late spring) of 1816. That Mary and Claire separated none too soon appears from the letter in which the latter wrote on 15th May, 1815, to Fanny Imlay (*alias* Wollstonecraft, *alias* Godwin),—

‘I am perfectly happy. After so much discontent, such violent scenes, such a turmoil of passion and hatred, you will hardly believe how enraptured I am with this dear, quiet little spot. I am as happy when I go to bed as when I rise. I am never disappointed, for I know the extent of my pleasures.’

Clearly the sisters-by-affinity had spoken smartly to one another before parting ‘for ever,’—a ‘for ever’ that fell considerably short of twelve months. At sweet seventeen the mutual resentments of two quick-tempered sisters blow over and leave no heart-burnings behind them. It would be ill for our homes were it otherwise. What would become of us were English girls so incapable, as Mr. Froude imagines them to be, of ‘making it up’ and ‘beginning again’ when they have had a smart tiff? It was all in the ordinary course of human nature that in the ensuing spring Claire and Mary were animated by ‘mutual affection, glowing with the impetuosity of girlish romance.’

Much as they delighted in their new home, Shelley and Miss Godwin needed the diversion of visiting scenes, even more alluring to lovers of nature than the glades of Windsor and the rich landscapes of the surrounding country. Besides making a tour along the coast of south Devon, and staying at Clifton during the summer, they went, at the end of August, with Peacock and Charles Clairmont, by the Thames to Lechlade in Gloucestershire, the river-trip mentioned in a previous chapter. Returning in September, 1815, to Bishopgate for the enjoyment of the autumnal colouring of the forest, Shelley may be supposed to have spent the happiest hours of his existence whilst meditating *Alastor, or the Spirit of Solitude*, under the oaks of the Great Park,—the poem that was almost as great an advance from *Queen Mab* as the *Queen* was in advance of his previous poetry. The first of his supremely great works—a poem that, had he lived to produce nothing greater, would, by itself, have given him a place amongst the poets who never die—*Alastor*, was published in an early (if not the earliest) month of 1816, together with the stanzas to Coleridge, the April-1814 stanzas

(from which so many futile efforts have been made to extort evidence touching the causes of his defection from Harriett); the verses on Mutability, the lines on the verse from Ecclesiastes, the Lechlade verses, the sonnet to Wordsworth, the sonnet on the Fall of Bonaparte, the lines taken from *Queen Mab* on Religion (styled *Superstition* in the reprint, for security's sake), the sonnet from Dante's Italian, the revised fragments of *Queen Mab*, styled *The Demon of the World*, and the translation from Moschus,—the last-mentioned item of the miscellany being one of the reasons why successive Shelleyan biographers and editors have ante-dated the unfinished *Essay on Christianity* by five or six years.

Had it not been for this trifle from Moschus in the *Alastor* volume, and the passage in Shelley's letter (dated to Hogg from 'Bishopgate, September, 1815'), where he says, 'I have been engaged lately in the commencement of several literary plans which, if my present temper of mind endures, I shall probably complete in the winter,' it would probably never have occurred to any editor of Shelleyan MSS. that Shelley produced, in 1815, a composition so foreign to his way of dealing with religious questions at any time, between the publication of *The Necessity of Atheism* and the production of *Laon and Cythna*, as the fragmentary treatise on the character and teaching of the Saviour of the World. It is not far to seek how the editorial mind came to commit so strange a mistake. On the discovery amongst Leigh Hunt's MSS. of the beginning of a translation of Moschus's third idyll (the elegy on Bion), written by Shelley on the same paper as a missing piece of the *Essay on Christianity*, it became obvious that the *Essay* was written at a time when he was interested in the writings of Moschus. This being manifest the first of the misleading editors argued thus: The *Essay on Christianity* was written near the time when Shelley was working at Moschus; the *Alastor* volume which passed through the press soon after the composition of the poem in the autumn and winter of 1815, contains a translation from the Greek of Moschus, showing that somewhere about that time the poet was interested in the Moschian idylls; moreover we have Shelley's assurance that in September, 1815, he was engaged on several literary enterprises which he hoped to complete in the course of the ensuing winter. Therefore one may safely assign the fragmentary *Essay on Christianity* to the year 1815.

It is obvious that to show the *Essay* is wholly out of accord with Shelley's temper and views on matters of religion in 1815, and on the other hand to show he was more strongly interested in the Moschian verse at a later period of his career, when his temper and views were in accordance with those of the *Essay*, is to sweep away the whole of the editorial argument. It is not too much to say that in 1815 Shelley could no more have written the *Essay*, than he could have composed the music of a great opera. On the other hand, the *Adonais* affords conclusive evidence that the poet was influenced by both Bion and Moschus during the composition of the noble elegy. Besides the translated fragment of the Elegy on the Death of Bion, by Moschus (written on the same paper as the portion of the *Essay on Christianity*), Shelley left a translation of Bion's *Elegy on the Death of Adonis*, both manuscripts being in the style of the poet's later penmanship. Yet further, the Shelleyan manuscript of the translated fragment of Bion's *Elegy on the Death of Adonis* exhibits on its back a draft of *Pan, Echo, and the Satyr*, translated from the Greek of Moschus. Thus, whilst the last-named manuscript shows that Shelley was working about the same time on translations from both Greek poets, and the *Adonais* affords conclusive evidence that its author was influenced in its composition by the same two poets, the manuscript of the translated fragment of the *Elegy on the Death of Bion* shows it to have been produced by Shelley's pen in the same period as the *Essay on Christianity*. It follows, therefore, that the *Essay on Christianity* was produced at least in the same period as the *Elegy on John Keats*. This abundant evidence that the *Essay on Christianity* should be assigned to the *Adonais* period of Shelley's literary career is further confirmed by these two important facts: (1) That the temper and reasoning of the *Essay* are in harmony with Shelley's views and feeling on religious matters towards the close of his life; and (2) That in conversation with Trelawny, who knew the poet only at the close of his career, Shelley 'said he had wished to write a *Life of Christ*, revoking the hasty afterthought (expressed in a note to *Queen Mab*) 'that Jesus was an ambitious man who aspired to the throne of Judea,' at the same time adding 'that he found the materials too deficient for reconstructing a *Life* having some solidity and authority,'—words indicating that at a time no long while anterior to his brief association with Trelawny, the poet had

been reconsidering and reshaping his views of the Saviour's career. Mr. Rossetti justly remarks that the *Essay on Christianity* may have been the out-come of this project. Most readers will also think the out-come, instead of being ascribed to a period prior to the composition of *Laon and Cythna*, should be assigned to the *Adonais* term of the poet's story. In truth the discovery of a Shelleyan copy of the *Essay*, dated 1820 or 1821, would not materially strengthen the evidence that Shelley wrote it in his life's concluding term.

At Bishopgate, Shelley saw little of his neighbours; the few of them who called upon him being so little to his mind that they were not encouraged to call again. Indeed, the only gentleman of the neighbourhood who seems to have approached the new settler on the verge of Windsor Park, without impressing him unfavourably, was Dr. Pope, the Quaker doctor of Staines, who, visiting the poet in the way of professional service, visited him also for the friendly discussion of religious questions. 'I like to hear thee talk, friend Shelley: I see thee art very deep,' the doctor remarked on one occasion to the author of *Queen Mab*. With the exception of this new acquaintance, who was only an occasional caller, and the two familiar comrades who had held to him staunchly in the previous winter of harassment and neglect, Shelley seems to have received no one at Bishopgate on a footing of sociability, from the middle of September, 1815, to the opening of the next spring. But the time of seclusion passed pleasantly in literary effort and the society of the two friends, with whom he read Greek authors;—Peacock strolling over to him twice or thrice a-week from Marlow, whilst Hogg (though a less frequent visitor at the cottage) seldom let a fortnight pass without walking down from London. Whilst reading Greek literature with the two scholars, Shelley found time to bring Mary forward in Latin. 'Mary,' he wrote to Hogg in September, 1815, 'has finished the fifth book of the *Æneid*, and her progress in Latin is such as to satisfy my best expectations,'—words reminding one pathetically how, three years earlier, he took a similar interest in Harriett's Latin studies, and wrote about them with the same satisfaction to the same correspondent.

As the time is nearing for Shelley to achieve his ambition of winning Byron's friendship, the occasion has arrived for glancing at the regard in which the more famous poet was held

by the author of *Alastor*, and also for glancing at the efforts made by certain of the Shelleyan enthusiasts to minimize the idolater's admiration of the poet they abhor, by insisting that the admiration was qualified with disapproval, and strictly limited to certain of Byron's more creditable literary productions. Let us see, by Shelley's own words and acts, how he thought of Byron from 1816, when they made the personal acquaintance of one another, to the opening of the year memorable for the fatal boat accident in the Bay of Spezia.

(1)—Of Shelley's regard for Byron in that year (1816), it is enough, for the present, to say that, after making Byron's acquaintance under remarkable circumstances, and spending some weeks in close intimacy with him in Switzerland, Shelley was at much pains from that time till the opening of 1822, to cultivate and preserve his friendship:—a fact which may, at least, be regarded as conclusive evidence that their intercourse on the marge of Lake Lemman was not fruitful of disappointment in the younger poet. Admiring the author of *Childe Harold*, whilst he was living in Free Love with Mary's sister-by-affinity, Shelley admired him none the less for dismissing Claire, and in later times worshipt him with a sentiment of idolatry that will ever remain one of the most remarkable examples of hero-worship in literary annals.

(2)—It is no slight indication of Shelley's esteem for Byron in 1817,—when, according to Mr. Froude, he must have regarded the author of *Childe Harold* with repugnance, as Claire's seducer,—that he left Byron a legacy of 2000*l.* by his will (dated 18th Feb., 1817), and also appointed him to be an executor of the will, and a trustee for the performance of its trusts.

In the same year, 1817, when the discarded mistress had given birth to Allegra, Shelley wrote in the preface to the *Six Weeks' Tour* these words:—

'Those whose youth has been past as their's (with what success it imports not) in pursuing, like the swallow, the inconstant summer of delight and beauty which invests this visible world, will perhaps find some entertainment in following the author, with her husband and sister, on foot, through part of France and Switzerland, and in sailing with her down the castled Rhine, through scenes beautiful in themselves, but which, since she visited them, *a great Poet has clothed with the freshness of a diviner nature*. They will be interested to hear of one who has visited Meillerie, and Clarens, and Chillon, and Vevai,—classic ground,

peopled with tender and glorious imaginations of the present and the past.'

Thus at a time when, according to Mr. Froude, he secretly revolted from Byron as a libertine and seducer, Shelley extolled him for clothing the beauties of the Rhineland with 'the freshness of a diviner nature,' and appointed him an executor and trustee of his will.

(3)—In 1818, in the prefatory note to *Julian and Maddalo*, Shelley wrote thus of Byron, the original of Count Maddalo:—

'Count Maddalo is a Venetian nobleman of antient family and of great fortune, who, without mixing much in the society of his countrymen, resides chiefly at his magnificent palace in that city. He is a person of the most consummate genius, and capable, if he would direct his energies to such an end, of becoming the redeemer of his degraded country. But it is his weakness to be proud: he derives, from a comparison of his own extraordinary mind with the dwarfish intellects that surround him, an intense apprehension of the nothingness of human life. His passions and his powers are incomparably greater than those of other men; and, instead of the latter having been employed in curbing the former, they have mutually lent each other strength. His ambition preys upon itself, for want of objects which it can consider worthy of exertion. I say that Maddalo is proud, because I can find no other word to express the concentrated and impatient feelings which consume him; but it is on his own hopes and affections only that he seems to trample, for in social life no human being can be more gentle, patient, and unassuming than Maddalo. He is cheerful, frank, and witty. His more serious conversation is a sort of intoxication; men are held by it as by a spell. He has travelled much; and there is an inexpressible charm in his relation of his adventures in different countries.'

In this strain of adulation Shelley wrote of Byron in 1818. Having put the flattery in clear type and on fine paper, Shelley approached Byron with it in his hand, and, kneeling, laid it at his idol's feet.

On 23rd August, 1818, Shelley wrote to his wife from Venice with grateful fervour, of Byron's sympathy with his troubles and friendly concern for his interests:—

'When we disembarked, we found his horses waiting for us, and we rode along the sands of the sea, talking. Our conversation consisted in histories of his wounded feelings, and questions as to my affairs, and great professions of friendship and regard for me. He said, that if he had been in England at the time of the Chancery affair, he would have moved heaven and earth to have prevented such a decision.'

There is something inexpressibly ludicrous in the notion of Byron 'moving heaven and earth' to stop Lord Eldon's mouth. The 'Childe' must surely have been laughing in his sleeve when he talked in this style, if, indeed, he said aught so superlatively farcical.

(4)—To the year 1818 or 1819 may be assigned Shelley's *Address to Byron*, the worshipful tone of which composition may be inferred from the only three lines preserved to us:—

' O mighty mind, in whose deep stream this age
Shakes like a reed in the unheeding storm,
Why dost thou curb not thine own sacred rage ?'

(5)—To the year 1821 may be assigned the Sonnet to Byron, headed with the words, 'I am afraid these verses will not please you, but,'—

' If I esteemed you less, Envy would kill
Pleasure, and leave to Wonder and Despair
The ministration of the thoughts that fill
The mind which, like a worm whose life may share
A portion of the unapproachable,
Marks your creations rise as fast and fair
As perfect worlds at the Creator's will.
But such is my regard that nor your power
To soar above the heights where others climb,
Nor fame, that shadow of the unborn hour
Cast from the envious future on the time,
Move one regret for his unhonoured name
Who dares these words;—the worm beneath the sod
May lift itself in homage of the God.'

Can passionate idolatry of a fellow-creature go further in the direction of abject servility without being lost in it? It is appalling to reflect that Shelley, a man of high intellect and culture, of gentle breeding and imperishable achievement in art, thought of Byron in a way to render it possible for him to utter forth such slavish song. It is asserted by Medwin (no sure authority on such a point), that this outpouring of adulation was never actually offered to the hand and eye of the poet, who could not have contemplated such a tribute of adorative homage without turning in cordial (though undeclared) scorn from its producer. The sonnet is said never to have been seen by Byron. But it remains that Shelley wrote it in Byron's honour; that he wrote it out (with amendments) on several

slips of paper, and, at least, thought of offering it to the man, whose contempt of his kind needed no such stimulant.

(6)—Written in June, 1821, *Adonais* calls on the world to honour Byron as ‘the Pythian of the age,’ and ‘the Pilgrim of Eternity :’—

‘The herded wolves, bold only to pursue ;
 The obscene ravens, clamorous o’er the dead ;
 The vultures, to the conqueror’s banner true,
 Who feed where Desolation first has fed,
 And whose wings rain contagion ;—how they fled,
 When, like Apollo, from his golden bow,
 The Pythian of the age one arrow sped
 And smiled !—The spoilers tempt no second blow,
 They fawn on the proud feet that spurn them lying low.

* * * * *

‘Thus ceased she ; and the mountain shepherds came,
 Their garlands sere, their magic mantles rent ;
 The Pilgrim of Eternity, whose fame
 Over his living head like Heaven is bent,
 An early but enduring monument,
 Came, veiling all the lightnings of his song
 In sorrow.

(7)—In August, 1821, Shelley was so delighted at Byron’s way of living with another man’s wife, and his consequent progress to moral excellence, that he wrote to his own wife (the faultless, stainless, high-souled Mary) from Ravenna, where he was resting as Byron’s guest in the Palazzo Guiccioli :—

‘L[ord] B[yrone] is greatly improved in every respect ; in genius, in temper, in moral views, in health, in happiness. The connexion with la Guiccioli has been an inestimable benefit to him. He lives in considerable splendour, but within his income, which is now about 4000*l.* a-year, 100*l.* of which he devotes to purposes of charity. He has had mischievous passions, but these he seems to have subdued ; and he is becoming, what he should be, a virtuous man.’

When Mr. Froude wrote so gushingly, almost in the same paragraph, of Shelley’s speckless purity of thought and manners, and Byron’s revolting dissoluteness in living with another man’s wife, he had still to learn that this guileless and angelic Shelley rated Byron’s *liaison* with the Contessa Guiccioli as an eminently virtuous and salutary arrangement.

In the same letter to Mary (mind, Mr. Froude, the letter is

written to Mary *née* Godwin, the writer's own exemplary wife), Shelley says:—

‘He’ (Byron) ‘has read to me one of the unpublished cantos of *Don Juan*, which is astonishingly fine. It sets him not only above, but far above, all the poets of the day,—every word has the stamp of immortality. I despair of rivalling Lord Byron, as well I may, and there is no other with whom it is worth contending. This canto is in the style, but totally, and sustained with incredible ease and power, like the end of the second canto. *There is not a word which the most rigid assertor of the dignity of human nature could desire to be cancelled.* It fulfils, in a certain degree, what I have long preached of producing,—something wholly new and relative to the age, and yet surpassingly beautiful.’

On, or about, the same day, Shelley wrote from Ravenna about this same Canto of *Don Juan*, which he commended so highly to Mary, for its unqualified purity and surpassing beauty, to his friend Peacock:—

‘Lord Byron is in excellent cue both of health and spirits. He has got rid of all those melancholy and degrading habits which he indulged at Venice. He lives with one woman, a lady of rank here, to whom he is attached, and who is attached to him, and is in every respect an altered man. He has written three more cantos of *Don Juan*. I have yet only heard the fifth, and I think that every word of it is pregnant with immortality. I have not seen his late plays except *Marino Faliero*, which is very well, but not so *transcendently fine* as the *Don Juan*.’

Let it be observed that, in the letter to his wife, Shelley alludes to the second Canto of *Don Juan*, and more especially to the end of it, as a piece of literature with which she is familiar. To demonstrate the excellence of the unpublished Canto he has just read in manuscript, Shelley assures Mary that, in its style, and the powerful ease with which it is sustained, it resembles the end of the second Canto,—*i.e.* the part of the poem which describes, with delicate and insidious suggestiveness, the mutual passion of Don Juan and Haidee in the cave. Is it to ‘insult the Shelleys’ (Mr. Froude’s pleasant phrase) to say that Shelley could not have thus referred to some of the sweetest and most voluptuous passages of the amorous poem, without knowing that Mary had perused them with enjoyment and approval? And what is the theme of the unpublished fifth Canto, which Shelley extols to his wife for bearing, in every word, ‘the stamp of immortality,’ and for containing ‘not a word which the most

rigid assertor of the dignity of human nature could desire to be cancelled ?' One of the wittiest and wickedest of the sixteen Cantos, this highly commended Canto contains the harem scene where Gulbeyaz vainly solicits Don Juan to minister to her lust. I do not wish to 'insult the Shelleys,' but I cannot conceive that Shelley would have written so approvingly of the Canto, had he not wished Mary to peruse this vicious and vitiating piece of Byronic devilry, and felt that it would please her to read how, in her desperate effort to conquer Don Juan's coldness, Gulbeyaz, in an imperial way

'laid
 Her hand on his, and bending on him eyes,
 Which needed not an empire to persuade,
 Look'd into his for love
 and pausing one chaste moment, threw
 Herself upon his breast, and there she grew.'

On 14th September, 1821, Shelley wrote from Pisa to Horatio Smith, of Byron's determination to write a series of dramas :—

'This seems to me the wrong road ; but genius like his is destined to lead and not to follow. He will shake off his shackles as he finds they cramp him. I believe he will produce something very great ; and that familiarity with the dramatic forms of human nature, will soon enable him to soften down the severe and unharmonizing tints of his *Marino Faliero*.'

On 4th November, 1821, Shelley said to Edward Williams of Lord Byron's *Cain*, 'His *Cain* is second to nothing of the kind.'

(8)—From Pisa, Shelley wrote, in January, 1822, to John Gisborne of the poet, whom he idolized :—

'What think you of Lord Byron now ? Space wondered less at the swift and fair creations of God, when he grew weary of vacancy, than I at this spirit of an angel in the mortal paradise of a decaying body. So I think, let the world envy while it admires, as it may.'

(9)—On 10th April, 1822, when his relations with the great poet had been shaken and ruffled by gusts of discord, Shelley wrote to John Gisborne, 'What think you of Lord Byron's last volume ? In my opinion it contains finer poetry than has appeared in England since the publication of *Paradise Regained*. *Cain* is apocalyptic,—it is a revelation not before communicated to man.'

Of course, Shelley's idolatry of his hero was not always maintained at this pitch of enthusiasm. There were moments

when the worm turned against his God, and wrote disparagingly of him. But the foregoing passages from Shelley's letters and works exhibit his prevailing view of Byron the poet, and his worshipful disposition towards the man Byron. Nor may it be imagined that the worshiper was enabled to think thus reverentially of the idol, because he was unaware of what was most repulsive in the darker stages of Byron's career. For Shelley is the most strenuous and precise of all the many givers of testimony respecting the Venetian excesses. Writing to Peacock of Byron's Venetian life, Shelley says, on 22nd December, 1818:—

‘The fact is, that first, the Italian women with whom he associates are perhaps the most contemptible of all who exist under the moon—the most ignorant, the most disgusting, the most bigoted; countesses [who] smell so strongly of garlic, that an ordinary Englishman cannot approach them. Well, L[ord] B[aron] is familiar with the lowest sort of these women, the people his gondolieri pick up in the streets. He associates with wretches who seem almost to have lost the gait and physiognomy of man, and who do not scruple to avow practices, which are not only not named, but I believe seldom even conceived in England.’

None the less able, however, was Shelley to admire the same Byron (of whom Mr. Froude writes disgustfully, for ‘living with another man's wife’) as a being to be worshipt for his divine excellences and beneficent achievements. None the less could he regard Byron with reverence and delight, as ‘the spirit of an angel in the mortal paradise of a decaying body.’

The winter (styled by Hogg ‘a mere Atticism’) had for its chief domestic incident the birth of Mary's eldest son, the ‘William’ of his father's song, and of the early grave at Rome, who was born on 24th January, 1816, on the ninth day after Lady Byron's withdrawal from Piccadilly Terrace to Kirkby Mallory. Byron's Ada was only in the seventh week of her life, when Shelley's boy entered upon his brief existence. Born within six weeks and three days of one another, these infants are curiously associated in literary annals; for whilst Byron gushed for the world's edification over his Ada in verse, that set the sentimental mothers weeping throughout the country, Shelley's parental devotion to his ‘delightful child’ broke forth into song that was no less insincere.

Mary Godwin had not risen from her bed, before all England was ringing with strange stories of Byron's domestic troubles.

That Shelley, who had created much scandal in a small world of comparatively obscure people by quarrelling with his wife, some eighteen or twenty months since, was more cheered than shocked by Byron's rupture with his spouse, is probable. That Byron in his domestic trials and social discredit had a sympathizer and apologist in the younger poet, is certain. To Byron's idolater, Lady Byron's inability to live happily with her superb husband was a sufficient proof that she was a faulty woman. That on falling out with his wife, so sublime a creature as Byron could not take another lawful bride, was in Shelley's view a signal example of the depraving tyranny of matrimonial law,—another argument why Wedlock should be replaced by Free Love.

On this exciting subject, Shelley and Mary were in perfect accord, when Claire ran in upon them, beaming with beauty, radiant with joy, brimming over with affection and happiness. She had rare news for them. Bent on going to Switzerland, she implored them to take her there. Switzerland? Geneva? Why was she so desirous of going thither? Mary had a babe at her breast, and was still only recovering from her accouchement; Shelley was busy at home with his books and writing. What reasons could Claire show why he should leave his study and Mary her home, to escort her to Geneva? Answering their questions, and disposing of any objections they made to her astounding proposal, Claire induced them to take her out *à Paris* to the Sécheron Hotel near Geneva.

There were no steamboats and railways in 1816. No mere jaunt for idlers and invalids, as it is now-a-days; the journey from London to Switzerland (as Shelley, Mary, and Claire knew from experience) was a painful and costly business in 1816. Mary Godwin's son was still in his third month, when the vivacious and irrepressible Claire came in upon her with these words, 'I am dying to go to Switzerland; the one desire of my heart is to go to Geneva; and you and Shelley must take me there,—not in August, or July, or June; but at the turn of April. You must pack at once and take me out to Switzerland!' Is it conceivable that Shelley and Mary yielded to Claire's vehement entreaty without asking her, *why* she was so eager to be off to Geneva; without satisfying themselves that Claire had an object in view which justified her in asking so much of them, and in putting them to so much trouble and expense? Is it conceivable that Claire would have carried her point with her

sister and Shelley, had they not regarded her again with affection, and been of opinion that she had a claim to so large a measure of their sympathy and assistance? Is it conceivable that in the month, whose lap is chilled by lingering winter, Mary Godwin with her babe in her arms would have crossed the Channel, and traversing France made the long and toilsome journey to Geneva, only to gratify the mere whim of a girl she disliked?

All these questions are answered in the affirmative by Mr. Froude, and the other Shelleyan enthusiasts, who require us to believe that Shelley and Mary Godwin accompanied Claire, *via* Paris, to Geneva, without any knowledge or suspicion—that Byron was journeying thither with his young doctor (Polidori) by the Rhine route; that Claire and Byron had arranged to meet at the Hotel Sécheron; that Claire had for some weeks before leaving England been Byron's mistress; that her object in getting out to Geneva was to throw herself into Byron's arms. Successive biographers have represented that the meeting of the two sets of tourists at the Sécheron was accidental. Till I exhibited in *The Real Lord Byron* the reasons for thinking otherwise of this meeting, no biographer had ventured even to hint that the juncture of the two parties might have resulted from pre-arrangement. It is now admitted, even by Mr. Froude, that I was right on this point.

But whilst admitting that the meeting resulted from pre-arrangement, Mr. Froude now insists that Byron and Claire were the only parties to the pre-arrangement, which (according to Field Place) was withheld by Claire from her travelling companions. Further, Mr. Froude maintains that, instead of being taken to Geneva by Shelley and her sister, Claire took them thither on her lap. Yet more:—Mr. Froude and his fellow-workers require us to believe that, when they accompanied her to Switzerland, without knowing or suspecting *why* she wished to go there, Shelley and Mary Godwin disliked Claire extremely,—disliking her for being a malicious, spiteful, and altogether intolerable girl; regarding her disgustfully on account of her vicious notions respecting the intercourse of the sexes. Touring in pre-railway times with an odious companion was even more vexatious than touring with such a companion now-a-days. Yet Mr. Froude insists that Shelley and Mary Godwin associated themselves for several months of foreign touring, with

a girl they disliked extremely, for the pure pleasure of her society. More still:—Mr. Froude wishes us to believe that, almost to the last day of their sojourn with Claire and Byron in Switzerland, neither Shelley nor Mary Godwin had the faintest suspicion that Claire was Byron's mistress; and that though Byron was at pains to have his mistress brought out to him, under cover of her travelling companions, he never saw her at Geneva, except in the presence of some witness to the propriety of their demeanour to one another. Admitting that Byron talked to Claire on the most delicate subjects—such as the arrangements for her accouchement, and plans for the disposal of her child when it should be born—Mr. Froude insists that, throughout her stay in Switzerland, she could not easily have been alone with Byron, even for the shortest interview. Mr. Froude makes this statement, though it is a matter of sure personal history that, whilst Byron lived in the Villa Diodati, and Shelley (with Mary and Claire) in a cottage at the villa's foot, the trio of the cottage often slept in Byron's house after sitting up with him till dawn.

On what grounds does Mr. Froude ask us to believe things, so incredible that it is difficult to imagine any evidence that would justify us in believing them? Mr. Froude has nothing whatever *to show*; nothing whatever to urge, in support of his extravagant assertions, except talk about a letter, which he may not show, because Sir Percy Shelley thinks it better not to show it. We are not told when this letter was written, under what circumstances it was written, for what purpose it was written. Mr. Froude says the letter was written by Claire. Any statement told by Claire, to the discredit of their curious views of Shelley and his career, is unhesitatingly rejected as a falsehood by the Shelleyan enthusiasts. They do not falter in charging Claire with falsehood in telling the certain truth, that she was the Constantia of Shelley's verse. They do not falter in charging her with falsehood, in saying that Fanny Imlay, *alias* Wollstonecraft *alias* Godwin, killed herself for love of Shelley. According to the Shelleyan enthusiasts Claire went through life, telling fibs whenever fibs would serve her purpose; and yet a letter, said to have been written by her (a letter withheld from public scrutiny), is enough to satisfy them, that Byron, after causing her (his already *enceinte* mistress) to come out to him in Switzerland, never saw her there except in

the presence of a third party. To believe this is to believe the incredible.

When it shall be produced to the world, it will be time enough to give an opinion whether this marvellous letter was written by Claire to screen Mary from her father's censure; or at a later time to whitewash her sister Mary in the eyes of Sussex society; or was a fabrication, for which Claire was in no degree accountable. Should it appear that Claire really wrote the letter, it will only be additional evidence of her faculty for fibbing. To support the letter's manifest untruths, with words written by Mary (who, as we have seen, was often curiously inaccurate in her biographical statements), or with words written by Shelley (who seldom let a month pass without penning something wholly devoid of historic truth about himself or his affairs), would be only to produce evidence of a conspiracy to impose an untruth on human credulity, for some purpose or other.

My way of dealing inferentially with admitted facts is this: On flashing in upon her sister and Shelley at Bishopgate, with joy in her face, Claire told them at once that she had won the great Byron's heart, and was holding the place, for which Lady Byron had been found unworthy. On learning from her how she and Byron had arranged to journey to Geneva by different routes, in order that public attention should not be called to their movements and purpose, Shelley and Mary Godwin consented readily to her prayer, that they would take her out to her lover. In brief, this is my view of the case. Let readers decide for themselves, whether they should accept the view as reasonable or reject it as the reverse. What motive can Claire have had for concealing her tender and romantic intercourse with Byron from her sister Mary, living in Free Love with Shelley? Why should Claire have hesitated to avow her friendship with Byron to the poet and social reformer, who had taught alike, by precept and practice, that love should be free; that the love which yearned for marriage was the only sanction its marriage needed. The only motives a girl in Claire's position could have for holding her passion from her sister's knowledge would be motives of shame and delicacy. Such motives cannot be supposed to have influenced Claire's action to her sister-by-affinity; the girl with whom she had studied *Queen Mab's* views about marriage, and the Chevalier Lawrence's *Empire of the Nairs*; the spouse of a man to whom she was not

married; the mother of a child who in the law's eye, from one point of view, was no one's child. What could Shelley discover of evil in Claire's attachment to Byron? The thing he approved for himself was no thing for Shelley to disapprove in Byron's case. The course which was virtuous for Mary, could not strike him as vicious for Mary's sister.

Mr. Froude writes disdainfully of Claire's probable presumption in 'perceiving the analogy of Byron's and Shelley's situation.' Mr. Froude remarks also that, 'so far from Claire's position being like that of Mary Godwin, it must have appeared to Shelley rather a hideous parody of it.' Why a hideous parody? The cases were too similar for the resemblance to have escaped any one of the trio. Shelley had quarrelled with his wife and was living with another woman. Byron had differed from his wife and was attached to another woman. Separated from their wives by what is called 'amicable arrangement,' both poets were living in Free Contract with girls they could not marry. The similar cases had no doubt their points of dissimilarity. But on the whole these points tell in Byron's favour. In taking Claire under his protection, he had not seduced a girl no more than sixteen years of age. He had not carried off by stealth the child of his most intimate friend. Nor had he taken such pains to win Claire as Shelley took to capture Mary. It is not certain when and how Byron made Claire's acquaintance. On this point there are two different stories; one of them representing that he saw her for the first time at a point of Oxford Street, to which he had come at her written request; the other and more reliable story being that their first interview occurred at Drury Lane Theatre, under circumstances set forth in *The Real Lord Byron*. Anyhow the poet's capture of the giddy and clever girl was an easy conquest, whereas Shelley's triumph over Mary was a very difficult business. In palliation of Claire's evil behaviour it should be remembered, that she did not act thus lightly until Shelley had educated her out of her early views, and that in becoming Byron's mistress she followed an example set her by Mary.

Though in my *Real Lord Byron* I followed previous biographers in saying Shelley and Byron met for the first time at Geneva, I am by no means confident that they had no intercourse in England before setting out for their separate journeys to the same foreign capital. Under the known circumstances it

would be so natural for the poets to have a personal conference in the earlier weeks of April, 1816; that far from causing me surprise, it would only fulfil one of my reasonable expectations, to come upon documentary evidence of their having met in London shortly before Byron sailed for Ostend. For the present, however, readers must be content with the assurance that Shelley and Byron came together at the Sécheron Hotel on the 25th of May, 1816.

Having consented to accompany Claire to Geneva, Shelley, in his preparations for the journey, acted as though he were especially desirous to prevent his most familiar friends from discovering or suspecting the real object of the expedition. Had he felt no need for secrecy he would surely have told so close a friend as Peacock whither he and Mary were going, and the purpose of the trip. He would have said, 'Mary's sister, who went abroad with us last July twelve months, is set on going to Geneva, and has persuaded us to take her there.' But for some reason he withheld the real purpose of the trip, and went abroad under cover of misstatements.

It must have been a day of early April, 1816 (though Peacock calls it a day of 'early summer'), that witnessed a curious scene in the library of the Bishopgate cottage. Be-thinking himself that he would take a mid-day stroll, Peacock (a visitor at the cottage) went for his hat to the hall, where he saw Shelley's small hat, but looked in vain for his own large hat. As he did not care to walk about the country hatless, Peacock returned to the library, where he was joined by Mary Godwin, who at once gave him the particulars of certain stirring news, brought that very morning to Shelley by Mr. Williams, of Tremadoc; the particulars thus passed on by Mary having just come to her from Shelley's lips. Instead of showing any excitement at the stirring news, Peacock took Mary's gossip coolly, and declared frankly he could not believe Mr. Williams had been to the house, or believe Shelley had received the news from the Welsh agent. Slightly astonished, and perhaps slightly nettled at Peacock's incredulity, Mary Godwin withdrew from the library. A few minutes later, Shelley (with Peacock's big hat in his hand) entered the room. Now for the scene between the calm, sagacious, stolid Peacock, and the tall, slight, round-shouldered, stag-eyed, fresh-complexioned, boyish Shelley.

For the full enjoyment of the combat between the two poets, readers must go to an article preserved in Peacock's *Collected Works*. In answer to a remark by his companion, Peacock admitted his inability to believe the account Mary had given him of Mr. Williams's brief visit. Insisting on the truth of the story, Shelley declared that he had seen Mr. Williams and walked with him to Egham, adding (in reply to a question by Peacock) that, during the walk to Egham, he wore the hat he still held in his hand. On discovering how far too big the hat was for his small head, Shelley admitted having snatcht it up hastily, and remarked that perhaps, instead of wearing it, he had carried it in his hand the whole way to Egham and back. Peacock may well have smiled; it being, of course, obvious to him, that Shelley had snatched up the wrong hat, only a minute or two since, to put himself into walking costume, and give himself the appearance of having just returned from a walk.

Seeing that the hat-trick had only confirmed Peacock in his disbelief of the story, Shelley pleaded how hard it was for him, a man who had devoted his life to the pursuit of truth, and made great sacrifices and suffered much for the truth, to be treated as a visionary. It was thus that Shelley mistook himself for a martyr, and required his friends to regard him as a martyr for the truth's sake. How had he proved his devotion to truth? The only sacrifices he had ever made of his interests were made from altogether selfish considerations. He had sacrificed his future interest in his grandfather's property, *in order* to preserve his interest in A and B, on which he could raise money for his immediate use. He had sacrificed a little of his interest in A and B, *in order* to get an immediate income of 1000*l.* a-year. Seeing how little Peacock was affected by the plea *in misericordiam*, Shelley proposed that on the morrow they should go to London, and call on Mr. Williams. 'He told me,' said Shelley, 'he was stopping at the Turk's Head Coffee-house in the Strand, and should be there two days.' Mr. Williams, of course, had told him nothing of the kind. Catching at the suggestion, Peacock declared he would willingly go to Mr. Williams, for proof that the marvellous story was a true story.

In accordance with this arrangement Peacock and Shelley set forth the next morning, to call on Mr. Williams at the Turk's Head Coffee-house; Shelley (an excellent walker) putting

forth his foot bravely, with the air of a man confident of achieving the purpose of the walk to London. But on getting half-way down Egham Hill, Shelley stayed the march to town by turning suddenly on his companion with a declaration, that after all he did not think they would find Mr. Williams at the Turk's Head. Peacock declared himself of the same opinion. Still holding to his invention, but altering it in an important particular, Shelley explained that, when declaring his purpose to stay two days at the hotel, Mr. Williams had mentioned a contingency, which might cause him to leave London before night. To this explanation the merciless Peacock replied, that all the same they might, by going up to town, learn at the hotel whether Mr. Williams had been there. The suggestion was not acceptable to Shelley. Shrinking from the proposal to put the truth of his story to the test, he declared he would find some other way of convincing his incredulous friend. He would write to Mr. Williams on the matter. For the present, it would be more agreeable to him to stroll about the forest than walk along the road to London.

Peacock assenting with a scarcely perceptible smile, the walk to London was given up, and the friends passed the day in the forest.

A few days later, nothing having been said in the meantime about Mr. Williams's visit, the question is reopened by Shelley with an announcement, that he had received from Mr. Williams a letter and a diamond necklace, in token and demonstration that the sender of the letter and necklace had visited Bishopgate in accordance with Shelley's story. Would Peacock believe the story, if Shelley showed him the necklace? Peacock answering stoutly that the exhibition of the diamond necklace would only prove to him, that somehow or other his friend was in a position to display so costly an ornament, Shelley forbore to show the diamonds, and desisted from his efforts to get the better of his companion's incredulity.

The matter was then dropt for ever. Shelley never renewed his attempt to impose the absurd fiction on Peacock's clear and steady mind. Peacock says that he had, on one or two previous occasions, argued with his friend against 'similar semi-delusions,' 'and,' adds Peacock,

'I believe if they had always been received with similar scepticism, they would not have been so often repeated. . . . I call them

semi-delusions, because, for the most part, they had their basis in his firm belief that his father and uncle had designs on his liberty. On this basis his imagination built a fabric of romance, and when he presented it as substantive fact, and it was found to contain more or less of inconsistency, he felt his esteem interested in maintaining it by accumulated circumstances, which severally vanished under the touch of investigation, like Williams's location at the Turk's Head Coffee-house.'

In other words, according to Peacock's view, Shelley was in these affairs a victim of delusion at bottom, and a wilful utterer of untruths on the surface. What does the reader think? There is no question that the statements made by Shelley were untrue. His father and uncle were not plotting to put him in a lunatic asylum; Mr. Williams, of Tremadoc, had not been to call on him; Mr. Williams had not given him intelligence of a plot for locking him up; Mr. Williams had not sent him a diamond necklace. Let it be remembered that Shelley was a young man capable of stating on paper his intention to have recourse to deception and then deliberately acting on the intention. He was a writer of wheedling letters to get money. Of all his many spoken or written misstatements, only three or four are misstatements without an apparent object. All the other misstatements had a manifest motive and object, sufficient to account for the employment of untruth. In the present affair his object was to get out of England without letting people know, or giving them occasion to suspect the real purpose of the Continental trip. His motive in saying he must go abroad to escape from his father and uncle, was to hide the fact that he was going to take Claire out to Byron. What does the reader think? My own mind is quite clear. My readers are free to think him in this business the victim of delusions; but I cannot take that view of the case. Anyhow, whether he was insane or untruthful, or (as Peacock insists) semi-mad and semi-false, readers must allow he was a gentleman whose letters and other written statements are not worthy of the credit, to be accorded to the letters and other written statements of persons of average mental sobriety and exactness; that he was a gentleman whose diaries may be suspected of containing a good many inaccuracies and a few wild fictions; that his bare statement is no sufficient reason for believing that his most intimate friend was a villain, or that his first wife was a superlatively wicked woman.

Another thing to be observed is that, as she was cognizant of Peacock's disbelief of Shelley's statement respecting Mr. Williams's alleged visit and news, and was in some degree a witness of the curious conflict of the two friends, Mary Godwin was aware of her husband's peculiar mental or moral infirmity, at least as early as April, 1816. From the spring of 1816, she knew he sometimes uttered statements too marvellous for one of his closest friends to be capable of believing them. Of course, no woman could live in conjugal confidence with a man occasionally suffering in so remarkable a manner from hallucination or deceptive propensity, and be for any long period unobservant of the peculiarity. It is, however, well to remember from how early a date of their association she was cognizant of the fact that, either from delusion or wilful untruthfulness, he was likely to utter statements at variance with fact.

More than five and something less than six years later (1821-2) Shelley assured the trustful Medwin and the incredulous Byron that, on the night before he left London for Switzerland in 1816, he had a memorable interview with a young, rich, and singularly beautiful woman, who had never before set eyes upon him. A married lady, of noble connexions, this historically nameless gentlewoman knew the poet only by his writings, when, on the eve of his departure for the Continent, she sought his presence in order to declare herself enamoured of the author of *Queen Mab*, and desirous of being the mistress of so superlative a being. Offering Shelley her heart, she implored him to respond to her devotion. Mated in Free Contract with Mary Godwin, the poet could only decline the lady's prayer, and soften his refusal of her suit by explaining that his heart belonged to the woman, whom he had taken in lieu of his wife. Two years and a half later he discovered that, instead of returning to her proper home and lord, the lady, whose flattering preference he was compelled to decline with suitable expressions of gratitude and regret, followed him and Mary and Claire across the channel, tracked them through France, and discovering their Genevese retreat, derived a melancholy satisfaction from regarding their movements. Of course, whilst she lingered on Leman's marge, worshiping her poet and envying his mate in Free Love, this equally interesting and miserable anonyma took all proper care, that he should neither recognize her nor suspect her proximity. Thus follow-

ing and adoring him in 1816, the unseen worshiper of his genius followed and adored him in 1818-19, till she died at Naples, after confessing to him how she had found an inadequate solace for her despair in pursuing him from land to land. Whilst Medwin swallowed this fantastic invention, Byron (laughing doubtless in his sleeve at the whole business) ascribed it to nothing worse than 'an overwrought imagination.'

It is needless to say the whole story is referable to delusion or falsehood. No lady proffered her heart and person to the poet in May, 1816. No lady followed the trio through France to Switzerland in 1816, and again pursued them through foreign lands in 1818. No lady died at Naples in the winter of 1818-19 in the alleged manner. The whole story was a piece of romance, that may not have engaged the poet's fancy for any long time before he communicated it to Byron and Medwin; though for reasons, to be indicated in a later chapter, I am disposed to think the fable had its birth during the poet's sojourn in Naples, in the winter following his last withdrawal from his native country.

CHAPTER X.

THE GENEVESE EPISODE.

Shelley's Arrival at Geneva—Byron and Polidori—At the Sécheron Hotel—Union of the two Parties—Tattle of the Coteries—The Genevese Scandal—Its Fruit in *Manfred* and *Cain*—Its Fruit in *Laon and Cythna*—The Shelleys' Return to England—Their Stay at Bath—Their Choice of a House at Great Marlow—Fanny Imlay's Suicide—Her Pitiabie Story—Harriett's Suicide—Review of Shelley's Treatment of her—His Responsibility for her Depravation and Ruin—Witnesses to Character and Conduct—Shelley's Grief for Harriett—His wild Speech about her—His Marriage with Mary Godwin—Birth of Allegra.

THERE is a conflict of evidences respecting the dates of the journey from England to Geneva. Whilst the *Edinburgh* 'Shelley and Mary' Reviewer exhibits the travellers in Paris on 6th May, and at Geneva on the 13th of the same month, Mary Godwin's letter (published in the supplementary matter of the *Six Weeks' Tour*) assigns the arrival in Paris to the 8th, and the arrival at Geneva to 15th inst. I am disposed to think the *Edinburgh* Reviewer right, because Shelley's letter of the 15th inst. to Peacock implies that the writer had been long enough at Geneva to turn himself about.

Anyhow, leaving England on an early day of May with Mary, her infant, the babe's nurse and Claire, Shelley was in Paris on the 6th or 8th, and at Geneva on the 13th or 15th of May (something earlier than the time at which the tourists are represented by successive biographers as reaching their destination). Dating from the Hotel Sécheron, Geneva, Shelley wrote to Peacock on the 15th inst. :—

'We are now at Geneva, where, or in the neighbourhood, we shall remain probably until the autumn. I may return in a fortnight or three weeks, to attend to the last exertions which Longdill is to make for the settlement of my affairs.'

When these words were put on paper, ten days had still to elapse before Byron's carriages drew up at the door of the hotel. Thus soon after his arrival, and thus long before Byron's appearance at Geneva, is Shelley resolved on staying there till autumn,—the time fixed for the ending of Byron's

sojourn at the same place. Does Mr. Froude insist that Shelley, on the 15th, was still kept by Claire in ignorance, that Byron would soon be with them? If so, even Mr. Froude must admit it was a very strange coincidence that Shelley had determined to stay at Geneva just as long as Byron designed to linger there. If Mr. Froude concedes that Shelley knew all about Byron's movements on the 15th, he might as well have said less of the younger poet's ignorance of Claire's pre-arrangement with her lover.

On Byron's deliberate arrival, some twelve days after Shelley had come in hot haste to the hotel, the two sets of tourists forthwith acted as though they had met there by appointment. Joining their forces, the two sets of tourists became one party. When Byron and Polidori left the hotel, Shelley and the sisters left the hotel. When Byron and Polidori moved into the Villa Belle Rive, Shelley moved with the two girls into a little house near at hand. When Byron and Polidori migrated to the Villa Diodati, the sisters with Shelley migrated to the pretty cottage lying at the foot, and under the trees, of Diodati. As the inmates of the cottage repeatedly passed the whole night at Byron's mansion, it is, of course, obvious that Mr. Froude was justified in saying Claire could not easily have been alone with Byron for a minute! From the day of Byron's arrival at the Hotel Sécheron, the two inseparable parties were regarded as one party, by the visitors in the hotel, the gossip-mongers of every Genevese coterie, the idlers who, during Byron's brief stay at the Sécheron, thronged and buzzed about the poets and their ladies, whenever they went (by daylight, or twilight, or at night) from the hotel down to the lake, or back from their boat to the hotel. Whispering that Mary (though styled Mrs. Shelley) was only the younger poet's mistress, and that Claire was Mary's sister in the fullest sense of the term, these idlers told one another, that Byron had found in the bright-eyed and brilliant brunette an agreeable substitute for his unforgiving wife. This was the tattle of the hotel, whilst the poets, Polidori, and the girls remained there. It is in the nature of such tattle, that, starting from imperfect truth, it passes quickly to egregious falsehood. Far worse things were soon said of the four young people by the Genevese gossip-mongers, than that Mary was Shelley's goddess, and that Claire was Byron's spouse in Free Love.

So much has been written, and is universally known of the Genevese episode of Byron's career, that Shelley's biographer may pass lightly over the particulars of the poet's sojourn with Claire and Mary on the marge of Lemman. Every one knows how, to escape from the intrusive inmates of the Sécheron, Byron with Polidori moved to the Villa Belle Rive, whilst Shelley with the girls took possession of the not distant Campagne Chapuis (whence Mary dated the letter of 1st June, published in the supplement to the *Six Weeks' Tour*), and how, to escape the telescopes of the Sécheron windows, which covered the garden and balcony of the Villa Belle Rive, the author of *Childe Harold*, with his young physician, migrated to the umbrageous grounds of the Château Diodati, whilst the author of *Queen Mab*, with Mary and Claire, went into the Campagne Mont Alègre (which gave Claire's child a familiar name), lying within the leafy *entourage* of their patron's mansion. There is no need to tell again how, leaving the two sisters to amuse themselves with letter-writing, and novel-reading, and graver studies, Byron and Shelley (starting for the expedition on 23rd June, 1816) made the well-remembered *Eight Days' Tour* of the lake, in the course of which Shelley so narrowly escaped the fate that befell him six years later. It is in every one's recollection how, in the squall that so nearly upset their boat off St. Gingoux, the younger poet's chief fear was that, in attempting to save a comparatively insignificant creature, the superb Byron would sacrifice his own existence, so valuable to mankind. Every reader recalls the words of the younger poet's narrative:—

‘ My feelings would have been less painful had I been alone ; but I knew that my companion would have attempted to save me, and I was overcome with humiliation, when I thought that his life might have been risked to preserve mine.’

Readers no less clearly remember how, just upon a month after the *Eight Days' Tour of the Lake*, Shelley and the girls, leaving Byron for just the same length of time to his own devices, made the *Eight Days' Trip to Chamouni*, returning to Mont Alègre and Diodati towards the close of July. Is it not in the whole world's memory how, when the rain held them prisoners in Byron's villa, the poets and the sisters, in the excitement of reading ghost stories, terrified one another with ghastly tales of their own invention ;—a tournament of wit and

terrifying fancy, that bore enduring fruit in Mary Godwin's *Frankenstein*? It is enough to remind readers of this page how, on the 18th of June, after hearing Byron recite the *Christabel* verses on the witch's breast, Shelley shrieked in horror at his own vivid imagination of a woman with eyes instead of nipples; and how in the ensuing August, when Monk Lewis had joined the group at Diodati, Byron, and Mary, and Shelley, and Claire, drew about the terrifying relater and beset him with their intensely excited faces, whilst he poured forth strange stories of hideous fancy and grim humour.

That Shelley had no intention in the middle of July of returning to England straight from Switzerland, but was possessed by a project of descending the Danube in a boat, visiting Constantinople and Athens, Rome and the Tuscan cities, and returning by Southern France, appears from a letter he wrote from Geneva to Peacock on 17th July, 1816, in the interval between the *Tour of the Lake* and the *Trip to Chamouni*,—a letter containing this remarkable passage,—‘On the motives and consequences of this journey, I reserve much explanation for some future winter walk or summer expedition!’ How about these words, that refer *not* to the ‘Eastern scheme which has just seized on our imaginations,’ *but* to the trip from London to Geneva?

Had he believed himself to have told the truth at Bishopgate, in intimating that he was about to leave England in order to escape his father and uncle, he would have seen neither need nor occasion for saying more about the motives for the journey. May the words be taken as an admission, that the Bishopgate fictions were fictions, and that Peacock had still to learn the full and true story of the motives and purpose of the trip to Geneva?

Whilst the Genevese coteries were saying evil things of Shelley and Byron, *each* of the poets knew the worst of the many bad things said about them in those cliques. Whether Mary and Claire participated fully in this knowledge is uncertain. Byron and Shelley may have withheld from the sisters some of the things said of them in Genevese society. From some motive of delicacy or considerateness, the two young men may have kept from the girls all they knew of what was tattled to their shame in the *salons* of the city; though one does not see clearly why they should have been so uncommunicative to the

eighteen-years-old girls, whom Shelley had carried through *The Empire of the Nairs*, and had introduced to all the reasons for agreeing with the anti-matrimonial note to *Queen Mab*. Enthusiasts in the new social philosophy, the sisters were prepared for the misrepresentation and calumny, ever poured upon social reformers by the slaves of prejudice and ignorance. It is, however, no question that the story, which Byron a few years later (March, 1820) charged Southey with circulating (and possibly inventing) in order 'to blast the character of the daughter' of the woman he had formerly loved, was a story well known to the author of *Childe Harold* in August, 1816. If, on returning to England from his Swiss trip, Southey reported (as Byron averred in March, 1820) that Byron and Shelley were living in promiscuous intercourse with Mary and Claire, the author of *Thalaba* only repeated a story, generally told and believed in Geneva, alike by tourists and residents, whilst he was living at the Villa Diodati.

Whilst living in retirement from circles which had shown a reluctance to make his acquaintance, the recluse of Diodati—ever, in his morbid egotism, no less eager for the gossip that lashed him to fury, than for the gossip that tickled his self-love—was kept *au courant* with the talk of the Genevese tables, by persons who had no difficulty in gathering it. What with Polidori (acceptable in *salons*, where his employer would not have been welcome), Hentsch the banker (cognizant of everything that went on in Geneva), Madame de Staël at Coppet (overflowing with almost maternal solicitude for Lady Noel's naughty son-in-law), and Fletcher (cleverest of valets at gathering the gossip of couriers and lady's-maids, and ever privileged to pour it with more than a valet's freedom into his master's ear), Byron was in no want of sure informants about Geneva's opinions of himself and his doings. And what he learnt of the current talk about his affairs, the exile from Newstead passed over to his brother in poetry and domestic trouble. As soon as Shelley and the girls had left for England, Byron was no less communicative to the friend, who, on coming to the Château Diodati (a week or so after the departure of the trio), had not been many hours in the villa, without hearing all about the scandal, that was largely influential in determining Byron to break with Claire. So early as 9th September, 1816, the recipient of Byron's piquant chatter wrote to the Hon. Mrs.

Leigh, of the Genevese curiosity and gossip about her brother: 'There was, indeed, until a fortnight ago, a neighbouring gentleman who had two ladies living in his house under the Château Diodati, and, as you may suppose, *both and each of these romankind*, as Mr. Oldbuck calls them in the *Antiquary*, were most literally assigned to the person who was accustomed to consider the cases of such kind of appurtenances, when superfluous or neglected by their lawful owners.'

It may be assumed that, in alluding thus lightly to one-half of the current scandal, the tattler plied his pen (not only in Byron's interest, but also with the poet's sanction), in order to anticipate rumour, with an explanation of the report, which would be sure to come to his correspondent's ears sooner or later.

Withholding, as he was bound to do, the names of the gentleman and two ladies, and all particulars touching the peculiar nature of their real intimacy, the writer of the words (here printed in italics) shows how fully and precisely he was informed, immediately on his coming to Diodati, of the rumour, which, affecting the reputation of either poet so injuriously during his life, and influencing in peculiar and different ways the poetical labours of both authors, had for its echo the hideous story given to the world by Mrs. Beecher Stowe. How the scandal stirred Byron's imagination may be seen in *Manfred* and *Cain*. How it affected Shelley's fancy and spurred him to the most extravagant of his conclusions respecting the intercourse of the sexes appears in *Laon and Cythna*. Had it not been for the Genevese scandal, *Laon and Cythna* would not have been brother and sister of the same parents, and Byron would not have written the poems that vexed poor Lady Byron's troubled mind in her later time. But for that scandal both poets would have escaped the still darker suspicions it generated long afterwards in the minds of men. But for that scandal, Claire would never have been suspected of the wickedness imputed to her by later calumny, and the Hon. Mrs. Leigh would never have been charged with crime of which she was absolutely incapable. Reverberating far and wide through time, slander is repeated variously by near and distant echoes. The scandal, that agitated Shelley so profoundly at Ravenna in 1821, was a revival and development of one-half of the slander that came to his ears at Geneva in 1816. The scandal, that

preyed for a while on Mrs. Leigh's reputation till the present writer killed it, was the distorted outgrowth of the old vile Genevese tattle about her brother's intimacy with the two sisters at Diodati. The base story, that came to Shelley's ears at Ravenna, was the near echo, the vile story of Mrs. Beecher Stowe's book was the distant echo, of the same slanderous report.

It is not surprising that Byron put an end to his *liaison* with Claire soon after hearing what the world said about it. No Free Lover (had he been one, the favourers of the Free Contract would have dealt less harshly with his reputation), but a man holding conventional (not to say fashionable) notions on libertinism, and old-fashioned notions respecting the matrimonial law, Byron held to the old, hard and fast, line between wives and mistresses. To him, of course, Claire was never aught more than his mistress, in the ordinary sense of the term; a mistress whom at the outset of his fleeting passion he regarded with a romantic tenderness that seventy years since seldom qualified a young nobleman's sentimental condescension to a girl in Claire's position; a mistress with whom he wished to live with a secrecy which would prevent the affair from coming to the knowledge of Lady Byron. Regarding Claire in this light and capacity, precisely as in later time he regarded Marianna Segati and Teresa Guiccioli, he was hoping for a speedy restoration to his wife's favour, and (under Madame De Stäel's counsel) was actually making overtures for reconciliation to her, even whilst the trio nestled in the pretty cottage at the verge of his Swiss tree-garden. The rejection of the overtures, and the intelligence of the scandal coming to him closely upon one another, it would under any circumstances have been natural for Byron to attribute the disdainful reply in some degree to the injurious rumours. But he had other reasons for thinking Lady Byron would have been less steady in her unforgivingness, had she not heard of the *liaison*. Not incapable of resenting a misadventure on its innocent cause, he was likely to conceive a sudden distaste for an arrangement to which he assigned his discomfiture, and a simultaneous distaste for his partner in the hurtful arrangement. Other influences (one of them being Claire's vehement temper) may also have concurred in disposing him to retreat from the association as speedily as possible. But in seeking for the sufficient motive of his capricious treatment of

the too-fervid brunette, readers need look no further than his disgust at the rumours arising from his intimacy with her, and his conviction, that but for her bright eyes and racy speech, he would have been starting for Kirkby Mallory, instead of making his arrangements for an Italian tour. Anyhow, without letting her see how completely she had fallen from his favour, or losing the worshipful regard of either Shelley or Mary (if their words may be trusted), Byron bade Claire farewell at Geneva. Returning to England with Shelley and her sister-by-affinity, Claire gave birth in the following January to Allegra—the girl who, dying in her sixth year at Bagna Cavallo, lived long enough to survive her mother's romantic hope, that through her child's influence she would recover something of her poet's love.

By the writers, who insist that Shelley and Mary went to Geneva in ignorance that Claire and Byron had arranged to meet there, and almost to the end of their sojourn in Switzerland, remained in their guileless ignorance of the Byron-Claire *liaison*, it is, of course, maintained that Shelley and Mary were greatly surprised on learning, towards the end of August, that Claire was in the way to become a mother. Possibly, the evidence of Claire's delusive letter accords with the evidence of other no less illusory writings. But no letters, however precise and authentic, by Claire or any other writer, can annul or weaken the conclusive testimony of the certain and indisputable facts and circumstances of the Genevese episode.

Returning to London on 7th September, 1816, Shelley passed through town to Marlow, and stayed a fortnight with Peacock, before going to Bath, where he and the sisters determined to remain whilst the house, which he had taken in the Buckinghamshire village for twenty-one years, was being painted, furnished, and fitted, for their habitation. It was on an early day of his sojourn at the favourite resort of fashionable valetudinarians, that Shelley, dating from 5 Abbey Church Yard, 2nd October, 1816, wrote to Mr. Murray about the proofs of the third canto of *Childe Harold*, which he had undertaken to see through the press,—a service the younger poet was well pleased and not a little proud to render his famous friend.

Exactly a week later, on the evening of Wednesday, 9th October, 1816, Mary Godwin received the 'very alarming letter' which caused Shelley to start immediately for Bristol,

only to return to Bath at 2 p.m. 'with no particular news' (*vide* Mr. Kegan Paul's *William Godwin*). On Thursday, the 10th, Shelley went again to Bristol. On Friday, 11th, he was at Swansea. After posting this letter at Bristol, Fanny Imlay, *alias* Wollstonecraft, *alias* Godwin, caught the Cambrian coach and made her way to the Mackworth Arms Inn, of Swansea, where, soon after her arrival at a late hour, she went to her bedroom for the long rest that was her last rest. On the morrow morning (Wednesday, 10th October) she was found lying dead, the nature of her death being declared by the laudanum bottle on her table, and the paper on which she had written:—

'I have long determined that the best thing I could do was to put an end to the existence of a being whose birth was unfortunate, and whose life has only been a series of pains to those persons who have hurt their health in endeavouring to promote her welfare. Perhaps to hear of my death will give you pain, but you will soon have the blessing of forgetting that such a creature ever existed as'

There was an inquest, with the verdict 'Found dead.' This was the end of Fanny, who, after leaving London on the 7th instant, for a visit to her aunts, Mrs. Bishop and Everina Wollstonecraft, perished by her own act at the Swansea tavern. A good, gentle, interesting girl, Fanny inherited all her mother's early affectionateness and generosity, without acquiring from the same source the vehemence and asperity that were amongst the chief faults of her mother's temper. But, together with exemption from the fervour and fierceness of her mother's nature, Fanny was not so fortunate as to enjoy exemption from its morbid sensibility. Together with a full share of the Wollstonecraft sensitiveness, she derived from the Wollstonecrafts the disposition to melancholy, that qualified her to do in mild resoluteness what her mother essayed in tempestuous rage.

To account for this desperate act, the reviewer of the poor girl's career is not driven to adopt Claire's explanation of the tragedy. Several circumstances, distinct from her regard for Shelley, had combined to trouble her profoundly during the closing term of her existence. It was natural for her to brood over the melancholy facts of her mother's story, which came to her knowledge, directly or indirectly, through the same channel that made them known to Mary and Claire. Her half-sister's flight with Shelley would, under any circumstances, have caused her the keenest mental torture; but the anguish it caused her

heart and soul was the sharper to so loving and sympathetic a creature, because of the grief, coming in different ways and degrees, to William Godwin (whom she loved) and his wife (with whom she lived harmoniously) from the date of the event which, violently wrenching asunder so many domestic ties, had broken up the home in Skinner Street,—though the mere shell of the old home, from which familiar joy had been driven for ever, was still maintained under conditions of deepening gloom and anxiety. No wonder the poor girl found the sorrows of her existence too heavy for endurance. Let it not, however, be imagined that she yielded to despair without brave efforts to conquer it. Whilst so many writers have used their ingenuity and skill in colouring Mary Godwin into a heroine, and varnishing her submission to Shelley's suit into a romantic love-story, how little has been said in honour of poor Fanny—the true heroine!—who, hiding her sorrow as she best could from the old man (who had been a good father to her), and from the woman (who had been a good mother to her) strove to comfort their grief and shame, whilst the heart in her own breast was slowly breaking.

Nothing nobler and more lovely, in the way of genuine domestic devotion and unrecognized heroism, can be conceived than the life of this gentle girl during the considerable interval between Mary's flight in July, 1814, and her own death in October, 1816. Never disdainful of those homely labours of the kitchen and store-room, which Mary has been commended for shirking, Fanny, during this long interval of her growing despair, was her step-mother's busy housekeeper and cheerful companion. Active in the kitchen and busy with the needle, she was at the same time her step-father's cheery 'right-hand' and ministrant,—ever ready to ply her pen in his service, and ever quick at his call, with bonnet on her head and smiles on her face, to accompany him in his walks. At last the brave heart broke, and the grave covered her. Is the world too virtuous to be incapable of generous compassion for the doer of her own death?

In a former page I have declared my inability to offer an opinion whether love of Shelley was in any degree accountable for poor Fanny's fatal desperation. It has already been said that Claire (a true witness, in the esteem of the Shelleyan zealots, whenever she supports them with a fib; a liar, in their esteem,

whenever she traverses their misstatements with a word of truth) gave it as her opinion that her sister Fanny died from love of Shelley, who was moved to write this elegy on the poor girl's fate:—

‘ Her voice did quiver as we parted,
 Yet knew I not that heart was broken,
 From which it came, and I departed,
 Heeding not the words then spoken.
 Misery—oh, Misery!
 This world is all too wide for thee.’

Of course, it would be absurd to torture this utterance of emotion into evidence on either side of the question. The words would have been appropriate to the tragedy had he known himself in no way accountable for it. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that the verses accord with Claire's view of the case. Mr. Kegan Paul says roundly that, though an attached sister to Shelley, Fanny ‘was never in love with him, either before or after her sister's flight.’ How can any writer be justified in uttering so stout a negative? If Fanny loved Shelley, she was not the girl to tell him so, till he extorted the admission from her by an avowal of a corresponding passion. Nor was she the girl to make the admission to her sixteen-years-old sister, before Shelley had made her an offer of marriage. To suppose her capable of making any such confession to Mary after the flight would be to suppose Fanny alike devoid of feminine delicacy and womanly pride. It follows that, if she loved Shelley, her lips were necessarily sealed to him, and also to Mary, on the subject. Consequently, any statements (to the point of Mr. Kegan Paul's negative) left by Shelley and Mary can, at the most, amount to mere evidence that they knew nothing of the matter, about which they were not likely to know anything. Many conceivable circumstances might have qualified either Shelley or Mary to reply in the affirmative to the question, whether Fanny ever loved him. But known facts render it more than difficult to conceive the circumstances which would have qualified them to answer the question in the negative.

Other doleful news came to Shelley and the girls before they returned from the West country and settled themselves at Marlow. They were still at Bath when they received intelligence that Mrs. Shelley's body had been picked out of the Serpentine on 10th December, 1816, and carried to her father's

house in Chapel Street, Grosvenor Square. Some uncertainty covers poor Harriett's story during the last and downward stage of her lamentable career, which thus ended by her own act, in the twenty-second year of her age; and finding enough for my purpose in facts that have been placed beyond dispute, I have been at no pains to search for other details of the closing term of the unhappy girl's depravation. It is said that, towards the end of her passage to the grave, she left her father's house to associate herself with a partner in Free Love? It may be so. It would be strange, had she (a married woman, discarded for reasons more or less light or grave by a husband, who went straight from her arms to another charmer) hesitated to place herself under the protection of a man who, inspiring her with affection, caused her to believe that in fidelity he would not prove inferior to the young poet, who one fine morning left her with a babe in her arms.

It is said that she took to drinking as her desolated life tapered into eternity,—drinking, in fact, so deeply that the once bright and lovely girl became a sot and drunkard. It may be so. Foolish people, and by no means altogether foolish people, when they sink into sorrow, are apt to drink for the sake of drowning care, and Heaven knows that poor Harriett (only twenty-one years old) had care enough to excuse her for trying to drown it—even in so futile and disgusting a manner. If Harriett drowned her pain of body and mind with wine and brandy, Shelley drowned his pain of body and mind with laudanum.

Of late years it has been the fashion of the Shelleyan enthusiasts to refer to Harriett's depravation, as though it gave a certain colouring of justification to the poet's withdrawal from her. My view of the matter is, that Shelley alone is to be blamed for the offences, committed by Harriett either *during* their association, or after their separation; and that human compassion for the poor girl's errors should be larger and warmer in proportion to their number and magnitude. Let the reader who hesitates to take this view of Mrs. Shelley's case ask himself these questions,—Who caught Harriett as a child on the door-step of her schoolroom? Who illuminated her when she was just sixteen years old out of the Christian religion? Who taught her that the matrimonial rite was a piece of antiquated mummary? Who taught her that the promises made at

marriage were not obligatory? Who taught her to think conjugal constancy a vitiating sentiment, and chastity a monkish superstition? Who encouraged her in the habit of talking of suicide as the death that would probably close her career at an early date? Who, by talking of suicide as the possible termination of his own days in this world, at least, confirmed her in the habit of looking to suicide as a convenient and innocent way of escaping from this life's wretchedness? All these questions must be answered by one name.

From previous pages readers have learnt that Shelley's desertion of his first wife was not so complete as people at one time had reason to suppose; that after a brief term the actual abandonment merged into a peculiar kind of separation by mutual agreement, and that, after she had consented (at least from a lawyer's way of viewing such matters) to the separation, he was for some time mindful for her comfort and pecuniary interests. It has been told how he sent her money from Paris in 1814, after having probably given her a considerable sum of money immediately before he left England. On coming into his 1000*l.* a-year he certainly set aside a portion of the income for her maintenance. No credit, of course, is due to him for doing what Harriett could have compelled him to do by process of law. Nor was the allowance he made so ample as to entitle him to any praise for free-handedness in the matter. What it was at the outset I do not know. But as it only rose to a fifth of his clear income, after it had been raised to the highest point to which it attained, the allowance never exceeded the sum he was bound in morals and honour to give her. Possessing a clear income of a thousand a-year, whilst he also possessed the power (which he exercised freely for his own convenience) of raising money on his interest in estates A and B, he should never have thought of allowing her less than 200*l.* a-year, after his final arrangement with his father. Had he not known that Mr. Westbrook was able to take care of his child and her children, Shelley would probably have arranged to give her more. But in doing his duty by his wife and children, he should have had no consideration of Mr. Westbrook's ability to do it for him. In the review of his treatment of his wife, remembrance should also be had of his desire to live in neighbourliness with her, and his transient disposition to receive her as a regular inmate into his own house.

The fact, however, still remains that for some months before her death she had passed from his sight. He had promised solemnly to cherish her (a promise certainly within his power of accomplishing in some degree); and it remains a fact that, instead of keeping his eye on her (as he intended for a time to do) he suffered her to slip from his cognizance. Regard being had to her age and the way in which he had uprooted her moral and religious principles, few persons will hesitate in saying, that he was under peculiar obligations to 'look after her,' and be ready at any moment to come to her aid, however bad her conduct either before or after their separation. He is not to be judged in this business as one would judge an ordinary man, whose wife plunges into immorality of her own free will, and in obedience to influences and circumstances in no degree referable to his action. Shelley's exceptional treatment of his wife placed him under exceptional obligations to stand by her and befriend her throughout life. Had he been the superlatively chivalrous and virtuous man his eulogists declare him, he would have felt this and acted steadily in accordance with the feeling.

Though most of the ascertained facts touching Mrs. Shelley's suicide have been withheld from the public, we are assured by Shelleyan apologists that the fatal incident was not directly consequent on any action by the husband, who had for some months lost sight of her. But to relieve Shelley of the obloquy of being the immediate, is not to relieve him of the shame of being the indirect, cause of his wife's death. Following in the steps of previous writers, Mr. Froude does Shelley the disservice of insisting that he did not blame himself for his wife's death. 'Nor,' Mr. Froude adds, 'did the family lawyers blame him, who knew the facts of the story;' 'the family lawyers,' thus produced as witnesses to character, being the one lawyer Longdill (Shelley's attorney, *not* the attorney of the family). By the *Edinburgh* 'Shelley-and-Mary' reviewer, attention is called to the fact, that at this dismal moment of his story, Shelley's 'friends, Hookham, Longdill, and Leigh Hunt supported him by their approval.' What supporters, at such a crisis, for the author of *Alastor*, the man of superb genius, soon to be the author of *Prometheus Unbound*!—a bookseller, an attorney, and a parasite!—the bookseller, who was making much, and hoped to make more money out of him; the attorney, who knew nothing of the matter but what his not invariably accurate client

had been pleased to tell him ; and the parasite, who, after sucking thousands from Shelley during his life, sponged on his representatives after his death ! What witnesses and what testimony !

Readers need not think so ill of Shelley as Mr. Froude does. It is certain that Shelley did reproach himself bitterly for his conduct towards Harriett. The biographical evidence is superabundant that he endured the keen remorse that is ever attended with self-reproach. How could it be otherwise ? When the lifeless body was fished out of the Serpentine, six years had not fully passed since Shelley paid his first visit to Harriett's home, bearing his sister's gift for her favourite school-fellow ; only five years and two or three months had passed since he carried her off, bright and winsome, in her untarnished virginal loveliness. How could he think of the thing he had made her without torture ? He may well have been appalled at the moment, and in the after-time been agonized by the consequences of his boyish heedlessness. That he was capable, not long after her death, of calling her 'a frantic idiot,' is no evidence that he escaped the anguish that is the inevitable punishment of wrong done in mere thoughtlessness, no less than of wrong resulting from heartlessness. The bitterness of the indecent speech was the mere mask of decent and keen regret.

There is, however, no evidence that he suffered aught more than a man of sensibility would inevitably suffer from so ghastly an incident. The story (believed by the *Quarterly Reviewer* of October, 1861) that dismay at Harriett's death and grief for her, whose lot he had taken so peculiarly into his own hands, rendered him 'actually insane' for a time, was a pure fiction. During the brief interval between the recovery of Harriett's corpse from the Serpentine and his marriage to Mary he was in constant correspondence with Peacock through the post ; and the letters Peacock received from him and Mary at that time were conclusive proof, that remorse did not so completely overpower him before his second marriage. The first to tell Peacock of Harriett's death, Shelley at the same time asked his (at that time) closest male friend, whether propriety required him to defer for any considerable period his formal marriage with Mary,—an inquiry that caused Peacock to advise him to marry her promptly. Three full weeks had not passed since Harriett's corpse was fished out of the water when (on 30th December,

1816) Shelley was married privately to Mary Godwin at St. Mildred's Church, Bread Street, in the presence of her father and step-mother. On visiting Peacock shortly after the marriage, Shelley (though no doubt suffering secretly from the events so closely preceding his second marriage) showed conclusively by his demeanour, that he was not overpowered by regretful recollections of his first wife. Reasonably incensed at the knavish gardener, who had lopt the fine old wide-spreading holly-tree of the Marlow Garden to a bare pole, Shelley displayed strong emotion at nothing else. 'Shelley,' says Peacock, 'stayed with me two or three days. I never saw him more calm and self-possessed. Nothing disturbed his serenity, but the unfortunate holly.' That Shelley never in later time went out of his mind from horror at Harriett's fate is certain.

There has been much vain and wholly needless conjecture, as to the considerations and the individuals that determined Shelley to marry Mary Godwin. It has been said that Byron advised him to make her his wife. It has been averred, Godwin constrained him to make Mary an honest woman. If Shelley spoke to him with any show of reluctance to celebrate the marriage, Godwin no doubt told him roundly that all intercourse was at an end between them for ever, should he delay to make Mary his wife. But there is no reason to suppose Godwin was tempted to speak thus plainly and threateningly. Nor is there good ground for thinking that Byron's counsel determined Shelley's course. How the matter came about is sufficiently obvious. Shelley's disapproval of marriage as a vain and depraving institution, was attended with a clear perception of the several reasons why, in an evil state of society, a man should consent to prevailing superstition and prejudice, so far as to put a bridal ring with the usual ceremony on the finger of the woman, with whom he intended to live for a considerable period. By marrying Mary he would qualify any son hereafter born to him by her, to succeed to the Castle Goring baronetcy, in case poor Harriett's son should die without male issue. By marrying Mary he would confer on her something of the social respectability he wished her to have, alike from considerations of pride and affection. By marrying Mary he would inflict another annoyance on his father. On the other hand, by refusing to marry Mary, or even shilly-shallying about the question, he would incense her father and, worse still, provoke her anger and

disdain. Under these circumstances how could he hesitate to marry Mary, as he had previously married Harriett? As to the sacrifice of personal liberty involved in the act of marriage, experience had taught him that to a man of his views the *vinculum matrimonii* was no galling restraint on individual freedom.

To suppose that Shelley (a few months hence to write *Laon and Cythna* and *Rosalind and Helen*) went to St. Mildred's Church from any respect for the religious rite would be absurd. I cannot doubt that he went to the Church because Mary (who at this time had him well in hand) meant him to marry her, and because he was under a promise to her to do so at the earliest opportunity. It is improbable that he asked any of his friends whether or no he should make Mary his lawful wife. Of all his friends Peacock was the man to whom he would be most likely to put the question; but on speaking to him so soon after Harriett's death, Shelley spoke of the marriage as a step on which he was resolved, and merely asked whether he might with decency take the step without delay. 'He was,' says Peacock (at that time in almost daily intercourse with him), 'the first to tell me of Harriett's death, asking whether I thought it would become him to interpose any delay before marrying Mary.' The announcement and the question were simultaneous.

It was thus that Shelley married Mary Godwin within a fortnight of the day on which Claire gave birth to Allegra, who was born on 12th January, 1816.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CHANCERY SUIT.

Mr. Westbrook's Petition to the Court of Chancery—Date of Hearing—The *Edinburgh* Reviewer's Strange Misrepresentation—Lord Eldon's Decree—Arrangements for Harriett's Children—Lady Shelley's strange Mistake touching those Arrangements—Lord Eldon's Justification—Mrs. Shelley's Regard for Social Opinion—Shelley's keen Annoyance at the Chancellor's Decree—Delusive Egotisms of *The Billows of the Beach*—Shelley's Pretexts for going to Italy—His real Reasons for withdrawing from England.

It has been repeatedly declared that the first Mrs. Shelley committed suicide in desperation, consequent on her elder sister's cruelty in shutting the door of her old home against her, when she called at the house in Chapel Street, in order to see her *dying* father. That Mr. Westbrook was not dying either in November or December, 1816, appears from the fact that in the following year he appeared in the Court of Chancery, as the petitioner in the suit, that resulted in Lord Eldon's memorable decree, that Shelley was an unfit person to have the custody and direct the education of his two children by his first wife.

On settling in his new home it was only natural for Shelley to wish to see these two children in its nursery. On the other hand, it was natural for Mr. Westbrook to have a strong opinion, that it would be ill for his daughter's two children to be given into the hands of a father, who (according to Mr. Westbrook's not altogether unreasonable view of the case) would educate them to be infidels and Free Lovers. Acting on this opinion, Mr. Westbrook refused to give the children up to Shelley, and followed up the refusal by petitioning the Court of Chancery, to take the children under its protection, and confide them to the care of persons, more fit (in Mr. Westbrook's opinion) than their father to rear and educate them. Filed in January, 1817, with affidavits and exhibits, this petition came on for hearing in March, 1817, on the 17th day of which month Lord Eldon delivered judgment in favour of the petitioner; the result being that the children were formally placed in the joint-guardianship

of their maternal-grandfather Mr. Westbrook, and their maternal-aunt, Miss Eliza Westbrook, and eventually under the personal care and tuition of Dr. Hume, a clergyman of the Church of England.

There is a curious conflict of the subordinate authorities, respecting the particular day on which the decree was delivered. Medwin says the judgment was delivered on the 17th of March, 1817, and this date is given by several subsequent writers; but Mr. Rossetti (so careful and conscientious a writer that he seldom errs in a statement of fact) represents, on the authority of a date given in Lady Shelley's curiously inaccurate *Shelley Memorials*, that the day of judgment was on or about the 23rd August, 1817. I can have no doubt that on this rather important point Medwin was right, as the first order, made immediately after the decree, appears in Jacob's *Reports* under the date of 17th March, 1817, and on the record under the date of 17th March, 1816 (i.e. 17th March of the legal year, 1816, and 17th March of the historic year, 1817). Medwin being right on this point, Shelley was out of his suspense, touching the event of the suit, on 17th March, and his mind in a better state for working at *Laon and Cythna* in the summer.

Of this decree the *Edinburgh* ('Shelley-and-Mary,' October, 1882) Reviewer remarks, 'But, as is well known, the paternal claim of Shelley to his offspring was resisted by their grandfather Westbrook, and rejected by Lord Eldon on petition, on the ground, not of Shelley's misconduct to his wife, but of the opinions expressed in his writings.' This statement is precisely contrary to the fact. The claim was rejected, *not* on account of opinions expressed in Shelley's writings, *but* on account of his misconduct to his wife, which on inquiry was found to correspond with rules of action laid down in the anti-matrimonial note to *Queen Mab*. The misstatement of the *Edinburgh* has been made in various ways over and over again, and has as often been corrected. Yet again to tell the truth of the matter will have no effect on those of the Shelleyan zealots, who are wont to reply to every correction of any one of their misstatements with a stubborn reiteration of the error. They will only smile, and repeat the misrepresentation more authoritatively. Such stubborn persistence in error has never before been witnessed in literary annals. But for the benefit of persons, who wish to know the truth of Shelley's story, I repeat yet again that Lord

Eldon's decree kept Shelley's conduct steadily in view. Conduct, conduct, conduct, is reiterated throughout the decree, till the reader grows weary of the word. And yet the Shelleyan enthusiasts go on stubbornly asserting that the poet's conduct had nothing to do with the decision.

Fortunately the Chancellor gave his judgment in writing, and fortunately the decree was printed in Jacob's *Reports* from a copy, furnished to the editor by Mr. (afterwards Vice-Chancellor) Shadwell, counsel in support of the petition.

Here is the whole judgment, given paragraph by paragraph, with a brief note by the present writer to each paragraph:—

Paragraph No. 1.—‘I have read all the papers left with me, and all the cases cited.’—No word here touching Shelley's opinions.

Paragraph No. 2.—‘With respect to the question of jurisdiction, it is unnecessary for me to add to what I have already stated. After the example of Lord Thurlow, in *Orby Hunter's* case, I shall act upon the notion that this Court has such jurisdiction, until the House of Lords shall decide that my predecessors have been unwarranted in the exercise of it.’—No word here about Shelley's opinions.

Paragraph No. 3.—‘I have carefully looked through the answer of the defendant, to see whether it affects the representation made in the affidavits filed in support of the petition, and in the exhibits referred to, of the *principles and conduct* of life of the father in this case. I do not perceive that the answer does affect the representation, and no affidavits are filed against the petition.’—Shelley's *principles* are here referred to, in connection with his *conduct*.

Paragraph No. 4.—‘Upon the case as represented in the affidavits, the exhibits and the answer, I have formed my opinion; conceiving myself, according to the practice of the Court, at liberty to form it, in the case of an infant, whether the petition in its allegations and suggestions has or has not accurately presented that case to the court, and having intimated in the course of the hearing before me, that I should so form my judgment.’—No word here about Shelley's opinions.

Paragraph No. 5.—‘There is nothing in evidence before me, sufficient to authorise me in thinking that this gentleman has changed, before he arrived at the age of twenty-five, *the principles* he avowed at nineteen. I think there is ample evidence in the papers, *and in conduct*, that no such change has taken place.’—Observe again how the Lord Chancellor keeps Shelley's *conduct* as well as his avowed and unrecanted principles clearly in view.

Paragraph No. 6.—‘I shall studiously forbear in this case, because it is unnecessary, to state in judgment what this Court might or might not be authorised to do in the due exercise of its jurisdiction, upon the ground of the probable effect of a father's principles, of any nature, whatever upon the education of his children, *where such principles have not*

been called into activity or manifested in such conduct in life, as this Court, upon, such an occasion as the present, would be bound to attend to.'—Observe, the Lord Chancellor declares, that the case under his consideration is not a case where he has to consider a father's principles apart from his *conduct*; that the case is one of a father's principles having been acted upon by him; that the judgment he is about to deliver has been formed on a consideration of Shelley's *conduct* in connection with his avowed principles.

Paragraph No. 7.—'I may add, that this case differs also, unless I misunderstand it, from any case in which such principles having been called into activity, nevertheless, in the probable range and extent of their operation, did not put to hazard the happiness and welfare of those whose interests are intrusted to the protection of this Court.'—Observe how, in this paragraph, principles and conduct are both kept in view.

Paragraph No. 8.—This is a case in which, as the matter appears to me, the father's principles cannot be misunderstood, *in which his conduct*, which I cannot but consider as highly immoral, has been established in proof, and established *as the effect of those principles: conduct* nevertheless, which he represents to himself and others, not *as conduct* to be considered as immoral, but to be recommended and observed in practice, and as worthy of approbation.'—Again in this paragraph the Lord Chancellor declares his judgment to result from the consideration of Shelley's *conduct*, following from his avowed and unrecanted principles.

Paragraph No. 9.—'I consider this, therefore, as a case in which the father has demonstrated that he must and does deem it to be a matter of duty which his principles impose upon him, to recommend to those whose opinions and habits he may take upon himself to form, *that conduct* in some of the most important relations of life, as moral and virtuous, which the law calls upon me to consider as immoral and vicious—*conduct* which the law animadverts upon as inconsistent with the duties of persons in such relations of life; and which it considers as injuriously affecting both the interests of such persons and those of the community.'—Here again the Lord Chancellor speaks of *conduct*; declaring that by *conduct*, resulting from his avowed and unrecanted principles, Shelley has shown himself a man likely to educate his children to imitate his *conduct*.

Paragraph No. 10.—'I cannot, therefore, think that I should be justified in delivering over these children for their education exclusively, to what is called the care, to which Mr. Shelley wishes it to be entrusted.'—No word in this paragraph about either principles or conduct.

Paragraph No. 11.—'If I am wrong in my judgment which I have formed in this painful case, I shall have the consolation to reflect that my judgment is not final.'—No word in this paragraph about either principles or conduct.

Paragraph No. 12.—'Much has been said upon the fact that these children are of tender years. I have already explained, in the course of

the hearing, the grounds upon which I think that circumstance not so material as to require me to pronounce no order.'—No word here about either principles or conduct.

Paragraph No. 13.—'I add, that the attention which I have been called upon to give to the consideration, how far the pecuniary interests of these children may be affected, has not been called for in vain. I should deeply regret if any act of mine materially affect those interests. But to such interests I cannot sacrifice what I deem to be interests of greater value and higher importance.'—No word in this paragraph about either Shelley's principles or conduct.

Paragraph No. 14.—'In what degree and to what extent the Court will interfere in the case against parental authority, cannot be finally determined till after the Master's Report.'

Paragraph No. 15.—'In the meantime I pronounce the following Order:'

This Order, forbidding Shelley to take possession of the children or meddle in any way with them, was dated on 17th March, 1817.

It appears, therefore, that in no single paragraph does the Lord Chancellor refer to Shelley's principles, without at the same time referring to the *conduct* referable to those principles. What was the *conduct* thus steadily kept in view? The answer can be given briefly. The petition set forth the circumstances of Shelley's marriage, withdrawal from his wife's society, and cohabitation with Mary Godwin; representing also that in thus withdrawing from his wife and cohabiting with Mary Godwin, he was in 1814, and from that year till his wife's death, acting on the principles set forth in 1813, in the anti-matrimonial Note to *Queen Mab*, which was one of the Petitioner's principal 'exhibits.' This was *the conduct or misconduct* the Lord Chancellor kept so steadily in view. Given in a nutshell the Lord Chancellor's judgment was this, 'Mr. Shelley in *Queen Mab* and the anti-matrimonial note attached thereto, printed in 1813, declared himself an enemy of lawful marriage; in the summer of 1814, Mr. Shelley acted on his avowed disregard for the obligations of marriage; Mr. Shelley's action and *conduct* on his avowed disregard for the obligations of marriage, makes me believe he will educate these children to hold his views respecting marriage, if they are committed to his care; taking this view of his *conduct* to his wife I decree that the two children shall be withheld from his control.' The judgment was based wholly on consideration of the poet's conduct to his wife, regarded as the result of his zealous adoption of the views of

the anti-matrimonial innovators.—Yet the *Edinburgh* Reviewer says that Shelley's paternal claim to his offspring was 'rejected by Lord Eldon on petition, on the ground not of Shelley's misconduct to his wife, but of the opinions expressed in his writings.'

From the substance of the petition, the affidavits supporting the allegations, the chief 'exhibit,' and the terms of the judgment, it is certain, that the whole suit from petition to decree 'went' on what may be called Free Contract considerations,—the evidence that Shelley had avowed himself a vehement enemy of lawful marriage in 1813, and acted on the avowal in 1814 and afterwards:—on the evidence of conduct, in accordance with, and consequent on the views, set forth in the book, printed when he was only twenty years of age.

How came the Lord Chancellor to speak of the principles of *Queen Mab* as 'avowed at nineteen,' when the book, though doubtless begun in the poet's twentieth year, was mainly written as well as printed in his twenty-first year? The Lord Chancellor antedated the avowal at least by a fraction of a year, whilst giving Shelley's full number of years at the delivery of the decree. Was the Lord Chancellor's slight inaccuracy as to the date of *Queen Mab*, a slip for which he was solely accountable? He may have miscalculated the time between the date of the book's title-page and the day on which he was delivering judgment. Or he may have considered that the author of a work printed in his twenty-first year might be assumed to have held and avowed, in his twentieth year, the opinions set forth in the book. It is however conceivable, and on the whole more probable, that he merely accepted a date given him in Shelley's reply (written by himself) to the petition. There being no copy of that reply in existence, nor any record of its substance, to speak of its contents is to speak conjecturally. But in such a paper Shelley could hardly have omitted to refer to the time when he wrote the book, of which so much had been urged to his disadvantage by Mr. Westbrook's counsel; and as he would see his interest in inducing the Lord Chancellor to regard it as a boyish performance, not to be accepted as evidence of his present opinions, it may be reasonably assumed that, in his reference to the important exhibit, Shelley put its composition as far back as possible. At Pisa, towards the close of his career, he wrote of the book as a thing proceeding from his pen when he was only

eighteen years old. In the Court of Chancery he could scarcely ascribe it to so early a time of his existence as his nineteenth year, but he may be imagined to have assigned its composition to his twentieth year. To discover a copy of the lost reply would probably be to discover evidence, that in 1817, the poet assigned to his twentieth year the poem which in the summer of 1821 he represented himself to have written 'at the age of eighteen.'

It is certain that the Chancellor was not referring to the *Necessity of Atheism*, when he referred to principles avowed by Shelley at the age of nineteen. The *Necessity of Atheism* was notoriously published when the poet was *eighteen*; and it proclaimed no principles, on which he had acted in the particular conduct, set forth in the petition to which the Chancellor referred.

The judgment having been delivered, it was ordered that Shelley should contribute a portion of his income towards the maintenance and education of his children. How much of his income was he required to spend in this way? *Primâ facie* this question would seem one which Lady Shelley, with the Field Place Papers about her, could not fail to answer correctly, if she undertook to answer it at all. Lady Shelley answers the question with curious inaccuracy. She says precisely, 'He was forced, however, to set aside 200*l.* a-year for their support; and this sum was deducted by Sir Timothy from his son's annuity.' What are the facts? (1) Shelley was *not* required to contribute 200*l.* a-year to the education of his children; he contributed only 120*l.* a-year, in equal quarterly payments. (2) Sir Timothy Shelley did *not* deduct 200*l.* a-year, or any sum of money whatever from the 250*l.* which he paid every quarter to his son's bank-account. The curious part of this achievement in blundering is that Lady Shelley publishes in her book the documents which disprove the statements of her text. The letters that passed between Shelley and Horace Smith, in March and April, 1821 (a body of correspondence published by Lady Shelley herself in her *Shelley Memorials*), show that Sir Timothy paid the 1000*l.* a-year to Shelley without any deduction; that Dr. Hume, the custodian of the children, received only 120*l.* for his care of the two children; that instead of looking to Sir Timothy, the Doctor looked to Shelley for the payment of this sum; that the Doctor was empowered to draw on Shelley's London bankers for

30*l.* a-quarter; and that with the exception of an additional trifle for *postage* and other extras, 120*l.* per annum was the whole sum of Shelley's contribution to the maintenance of the children. It is thus that Lady Shelley deals with facts from her authentic sources.

It appears, therefore, that these proceedings in the Court of Chancery left Shelley with the clear income of 880*l.* a-year; a larger revenue by 80*l.* a-year than the yearly income he had reserved for his own use on raising Harriett's allowance to its highest sum:—a fact to be borne in mind, since successive writers have spoken of these proceedings, as seriously reducing the income at his command before the first Mrs. Shelley's death.

From the August of 1817, even to this year of grace, Lord Eldon has been written of bitterly for depriving so bright a genius and so virtuous a citizen as Shelley of the care of his own offspring; and so long as organs of social opinion, so powerful as the *Edinburgh Review*, continue to misstate the grounds of the Lord Chancellor's decree, he will continue to be denounced as a prodigy of intolerance. It will be otherwise, if writers bear in mind what were the real grounds of the judgment, for which he has been censured so vehemently.

To say thus much in the Lord Chancellor's justification is not to say that his reasonable opinion would have been justified by the event, had Shelley contrived to get possession of the two children, and carrying them beyond the limits of the Chancellor's jurisdiction, educated them in accordance with his notions of parental duty. On the contrary, I have little doubt that, had he taken them to Italy together with Willie and Clara, and lived long enough to form their morals, he would not have educated them in his anti-matrimonial views, but would have trained them for the most part like the majority of English boys and girls, living abroad under the control of liberal-minded Christian parents. I have two reasons for this opinion. Unless I am greatly mistaken, had he lived well into life's middle term, long before the children had attained the age at which he would have thought of directing their young minds to questions touching the intercourse of the sexes, the author of *Laon and Cythna* would have so far survived his enthusiasm for the Free Contract and his wilder Free Love phantasies, as to have no wish to see his children avoid the bonds of lawful marriage. Had it been otherwise with him, I am confident that Mrs.

Shelley would have resisted strenuously and successfully his wish to educate his children to prefer the Free Contract to lawful wedlock. Of the girls, whom he tried for any considerable period to illuminate out of Christianity and conventional respectability, his strong-willed second wife was perhaps his least submissive pupil. The young woman, who made him marry her on the earliest opportunity; who at Great Marlow used to order him about as though he were a child; who had her children christened before taking them out of England in 1818; who used to attend the services of the Anglican Church in Italian cities; who during her residence in Italy hungered for social recognition; and who in her later time was no less mindful of social opinion than for 'a brief hour of her girlhood she had been reckless and defiant of it,' was not the woman to allow her children to be educated in disregard for the sanctity of the matrimonial rite. Nurtured within the lines of orthodoxy, and educated for respectability by the step-mother, of whom she lived to speak and write ungenerously, Shelley's second wife was not a woman to let him train her own daughters (had they lived), or Harriett's little Ianthé, to follow in the steps of Mary Wollstonecraft.

Much romantic and sensational stuff has been written of the anguish that came to Shelley from Lord Eldon's barbarity. It has been told again and again how these interesting babes were torn from his breast. As he had left the elder of them of his own accord, when he left her mother, and was content to let them remain in Chapel Street after losing sight of their mother, they can scarcely be said to have been *torn from* his breast. Such writing (like the story of his going clean mad from grief for Harriett) may go for what it is worth, whilst judicious readers are content to allow, that Shelley must have been acutely mortified and incensed by a judgment affecting his honour so darkly and deeply, and that he probably mistook for torture of wounded affection, what was only sharp chagrin at an humiliating misadventure. Some of the sensational writers give curious reasons for thinking Shelley suffered unimaginable anguish from the violence done to his parental feelings. For instance, Hunt is sure that Shelley suffered inordinately from the loss of the children because, after the subsidence of his first violent agitation at the Chancellor's cruelty, he *never spoke about them*. That Byron was no more insincere in gushing to the whole

world about the Ada he might not look upon, than Shelley was in writing *The Billows on the Beach*, is a matter admitting of proof.

This poem 'To William Shelley' has been used by successive writers as sure evidence that, in leaving England in 1818 with his family, Shelley was mainly moved by a desire to carry his children beyond the reach of Lord Eldon, whom he suspected of a design to tear them from him. Dealing with this poem, as Lady Shelley deals with the poet's imaginary reminiscences of his boyhood in *Laon and Cythna*, what do we learn from it? That the poet carried his son William across the sea, when the sky was black and the wind boisterous; that he carried the boy over the stormy water, in order that the servants of the Court of Chancery should not tear them asunder; that the Court of Chancery had already taken from the boy a brother and sister who were known and dear to him; that Mrs. Shelley and her little girl were companions of this voyage over a wind-swept sea; that little William was alarmed at the rocking of the boat, and the cold spray, and the wild clamour; that the poet and his wife had reason to think the storm, with all its dark and hungry billows, less cruel than the Court of Chancery, and to regard themselves as flying from merciless agents of that Court; that little William was old enough to be likely to hold in remembrance the flight over the stormy sea; that, though perhaps not old enough to apprehend the meaning of the written verses, he was at least old enough to comprehend their sentiment when put in language, adapted to the understanding of a young child. It is, no doubt, very absurd to read a poem in this way, and reduce its figurative expressions into bald statement. But biographers have not hesitated to deal in this way with the imaginary reminiscences of *Laon and Cythna* and *Prince Athanase*.

Now for the facts to set in array beside the statements of the poem. Instead of being old enough to apprehend the meaning of his father's words, and to be likely to remember the voyage as a dream of long-forgotten days, little William was only two years and two months old when he crossed the Channel. No brother and sister had been taken from him. His father and mother were not flying from the Court of Chancery, when they went abroad. They did not go to Italy to get out of the Lord Chancellor's grip. They knew that, in respect to William and

little Clara, they had nothing to fear from the Court. How far did the conditions and incidents of their passage over the water accord with the descriptive touches of the poem? Heaven knows. Heaven also knows that the poem was written months before the voyage was made. The poem *To William Shelley* was written in 1817, the voyage was made in March, 1818. This fact shows how cautious people should be in building up the poet's personal story out of passages from his poems and letters. Shelley's accounts of his school-days in *Laon and Cythna*, or of any other matter of his past history, were as imaginary as his description of his flight across the Channel, or any other matter of his future history.

It may be urged, but evidence forbids it to be conceded, that, whilst writing the imaginary piece of autobiography, Shelley was under the impression that, unless he took his two children by Mary Godwin abroad, the Court of Chancery would wrest them from him. Such a fear might have possessed Shelley before the Chancery suit, but even Shelley could not have entertained so wild a fancy *after* the suit, which had made him a lawyer in respect to the Court's power to do what he pretended to fear. He knew that the Court would not have listened to Mr. Westbrook's suit had he not made a provision for the children by settling 2000*l.* upon them. He knew that till some similar provision, in property of some sort, had been made for William and Clara, no proceedings could be taken in Chancery to remove them from his control. Moreover, he knew that the Court would not think of taking them from their mother.

It would not surprise me to come upon letters, written by Shelley to induce some of his friends to think he suffered from the fear, but they would not affect my strong opinion that he was never troubled by the apprehension between the delivery of the Lord Chancellor's decree and the departure for Italy, whither he went in 1818 from several motives, any one of which would have been sufficient to account for his action,—(a) from restlessness; (b) from a desire to get away from his creditors, who were troubling him; (c) from a desire to get away from friends who were sponging upon him and draining his resources extortionately; (d) from a desire to be nearer Byron, a strong attraction to him from 1818 to a few months before his death; (e) from a notion that by going out to Italy with Clara and little Allegra, instead of sending the child (just a year and two

months old) thither under the charge of a servant, he might render his wife's 'sister' good service; (*f*) from a notion that his health required a southern climate. These are the motives that caused him to go abroad.

In a letter (*vide Shelley Memorials*) to William Godwin (dated from Marlow, 7th December, 1817) Shelley rested his determination altogether on the state of his health, in these words :—

'I have experienced a decisive pulmonary attack; and, although at present it has passed away without any considerable vestige of its existence, yet this symptom sufficiently shows the true nature of my disease to be consumption. In the event of its assuming any decided shape, it would be my *duty* to go to Italy without delay; and it is only when that measure becomes an indispensable *duty* that, *contrary to both Mary's feelings* and mine, as they regard you, I shall go to Italy.'

Had Shelley at this time been under the particular fear of the Lord Chancellor, he would not have failed to name it as a ground for wishing to go abroad; as a reason even stronger than his desire to preserve his health and life, for Mary's sake and for the sake of her father and her children.

From this letter it is manifest that Shelley's disposition to go to Italy was, up to 7th December, 1817, opposed by his wife, and also by her father, with whom he was again on friendly, though of course far from cordial terms. It is noteworthy that in this epistle to Godwin he does not venture to suggest that he was thinking of taking his children out of England, in order to keep them under his eye, and at the same time put them beyond the Lord Chancellor's grip.

At the time of writing in these terms to his father-in-law Shelley had already written (*vide Shelley Memorials*) from Hunt's house thus to his wife :—

'Now, dearest, let me talk to you. I think we ought to go to Italy. I think my health might receive a renovation there, for want of which perhaps I should never entirely overcome that state of diseased action which is so painful to my beloved. I think Alba ought to be with her father. This is a thing of incredible importance to the happiness perhaps of many human beings. It might be managed without our going there. Yes, but not without an expense which would in fact suffice to settle us comfortably in a spot where I might be regaining that health which you consider so valuable. It is valuable to you, my own dearest. I see too plainly that you will never be quite happy till I am well. Of

myself I do not speak, for I feel only for you. First, this money. I am sure that if I ask Horace Smith he will lend me 200*l.* or even 250*l.* more. I did not like to do it from delicacy, and a wish to take only just enough; but I am quite certain that he would lend me the money.'

Thornton Hunt says that it was a characteristic practice with Shelley to specify *one* sufficient motive for any course of action, and to ignore all minor motives; and that he was thus, without any real cause, sometimes regarded as uncandid or reserved. This is the younger Hunt's ingenious way of palliating the ugly fact, that Shelley often alleged one motive for a course of action, which was really consequent on another motive. But in this letter to Mary, instead of alleging only one reason for wishing to go to Italy, he alleges several reasons,—(a) his concern for his health; (b) his concern for his dearest Mary's happiness, which will be never complete till he is quite well; (c) his desire to do the best for Allegra; and (d) his care for the 'many human beings,' whose happiness may possibly be affected by the arrangements for making Byron take a lively interest in his illegitimate daughter. Here are four motives for determining to go to Italy; but never a word as to the writer's desire to get his own dear babes by Mary outside the Lord Chancellor's jurisdiction.

Had he been really actuated by the desire, he would surely have specified it to the *mother* of the children, as the strongest conceivable argument for bringing her to his mind respecting the migration to Italy.

CHAPTER XII.

GREAT MARLOW.

The Misleading Tablet—House and Garden—Claire at Marlow—Shelley's Delight in Claire's Voice—*To Constantia Singing*—Source of the Name—Trips to London—*The Marlow Pamphlets*—*Rosalind and Helen*—Other Literary Work at Marlow—Mary's Treatment and Opinion of Claire—Shelley makes his Will—Date of Probate—The Will's various Legacies—Significant Legacies to Claire—Object of the Second Legacy of £6000—Did Shelley mean to leave Claire so much as £12,000?—Mr. Froude's Indiscretion—His Ignorance of the Will.

OVER the wall (towards the high road) of the house, inhabited for about a year by Shelley at Great Marlow, may be seen a tablet bearing this inscription, chiselled at the cost of a gentleman, whose intention to honour the poet was more creditable than his knowledge of the poet's story:—

This Tablet was Placed A.D. 1867,
At the Instance of
Sir William, Robert Clayton, Bart.,
To Perpetuate the Record that
PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY
Lived and Worked in this House
And was Here Visited by
Lord Byron.

‘He is Gone where all Things Wise and fair
Descend. Oh, Dream not the Amorous Deep
Will yet Restore him to the Vital air,
Death Feeds on His Mute Voice, and Laughs at Our Despair.’
ADONAIS.

Byron having left England for ever long before Shelley entered the house, it is needless to say that the poets never exchanged words under its roof.

Regarded from the road, this house is, at the present time, a dingy and mean dwelling; but on entering it, the visitor is agreeably surprised by the magnitude of the rooms (one of them, *i.e.* Shelley's library, being, in Peacock's opinion, not in mine, large enough for a ball-room); and the rectangular garden in the rear of the building (a garden, at this present time, divided into four several plots of ground) is twenty-one

yards wide and two hundred and twenty-five yards long. Readers may rely on the exactness of these particulars of the garden's size, which were given to me for this work by my friend Mr. William Ford Langworthy.

The knavish gardener having lopt the fine holly to a bare pole, Shelley was at considerable cost in planting this garden with shrubs. About the same time the house (taken on lease for twenty-one years) was re-decorated and furnished at no small expense; the library (big enough for a ball-room) being fitted with shelves and books on terms, that were not otherwise than advantageous to the 'unbiased' Mr. Hookham, of Bond Street. Without meaning to live in this pleasant house 'for ever,' Shelley, no doubt, intended to make it his home, till he should succeed to estates A and B. Mrs. Shelley hoped the place would be her home till she should become Lady Shelley. But human creatures are less the rulers than the sport of circumstances. Little more than a year had passed since their settlement at Marlow when, yielding reluctantly to her husband's solicitations, Mrs. Shelley went with him to Italy for the remainder of his days.

It has been the fashion of the Shelleyan partisans to speak of the Shelleys' kindness to Claire as though she were a kind of fallen woman, whom they magnanimously sheltered from social opprobrium. That they were very kind to her when she needed their sympathy and care, is unquestionable; but in estimating their conduct towards Claire, the reader must remember, not only their familiar relationship to her, but also that, in her intimacy with Byron, Claire had done nothing to forfeit their respect. So soon after her marriage with the poet, under whose 'protection' she had been living for two years and a half, Mrs. Shelley could scarcely assume an attitude of virtuous superiority and condescension to her sister, who had lived in the same way with another poet for a shorter time. That Mrs. Shelley was altogether pleased to have Claire on her hands, in 1817 and afterwards, is not to be supposed. On the contrary, a letter of her writing shows that, some time elapsed after her return from Switzerland, in September, 1816, before she consented to receive Claire as a permanent inmate of her home. But circumstances constrained her to consent.

It would have been inhuman in the Shelleys to decline to shelter Claire during her accouchement. It is not wonderful

that they gave her and her child a home at Marlow. It was necessary that Claire's babe should be born under circumstances most likely to keep the affair from her mother and step-father, who had no knowledge or suspicion of their child's *liaison* with Byron. In providing Claire with the retreat, in which she gave birth to Allegra with the utmost secrecy, and in afterwards providing her with a home, in which to cherish her infant with similar privacy, the Shelleys were actuated by care for themselves, as well as by affection for her. Mrs. Shelley had suffered too severely from her father's displeasure, not to be very desirous of withholding from him matters which would, on coming to his and Mrs. Godwin's knowledge, be sure to occasion its renewal. Now that the sisters had been pardoned by Skinner Street, and general harmony been re-established in the family circle, it was obvious that Claire must live for a while either at Marlow or under Godwin's roof. On leaving her sister's side, she could not keep away from her mother's house without giving offence or provoking suspicion. Her return to Skinner Street would be followed quickly by disclosures, certain to result in a fresh outbreak of family dissension. On the other hand, so long as they knew her to be living with the Shelleys at Marlow, Mr. and Mrs. Godwin would not be uneasy or inconveniently curious about her. Out of her mother's observation, she could nurse her child at Marlow in greater security from detection than anywhere else.

That Shelley found the dark-eyed and charming, though sometimes exasperatingly freakish, girl, upon the whole an agreeable inmate, and was, in some degree, rewarded for his hospitality by the delight coming to him from her faculty of song, may be inferred from Shelley's poem 'To Constantia Singing' (1817), opening with the stanza,—

‘ TO CONSTANTIA SINGING.

Thus to be lost and thus to sink and die,
 Perchance were death indeed !—Constantia, turn !
 In thy dark eyes a power like light doth lie,
 Even though the sounds which were thy voice, which burn
 Between thy lips, are laid to sleep ;
 Within thy breath, and on thy hair, like odour it is yet,
 And from thy touch like fire doth leap.
 Even while I write, my burning cheeks are wet ;
 Alas, that the torn heart can bleed, but not forget !”

Shelley left behind him fragments of two other poems, addressed to Claire under the name of Constantia. But why Constantia? Always sagacious in his suggestions respecting the poet, whose story he told with such admirable tenderness and fairness, Mr. Rossetti suggests that Constantia was a fancy-name, taken from Constantia Dudley, the heroine of Brockden Brown's *Ormond*,—one of the several novels by a forgotten writer, which Shelley admired so greatly. None the less certain, however, is it, that the heroine of the poem was the Claire in whose singing Shelley delighted in later time, no less than in 1817, and for whose progress in the most effective of her several accomplishments he was thoughtful during their stay at Marlow. Of course, Claire was vastly delighted by her brother-in-law's approval of her singing, and by the great compliment he rendered her, in giving poetical expression to the approval. The second Mrs. William Godwin's daughter took strange liberties with her name. Christened Mary Jane (a homely name enough), she usually signed her letters 'Claire,' after inventing that agreeable designation for her bright and fascinating individuality; and she also caused herself sometimes to be described, as Clara Mary Constantia Jane Clairmont;—'Constantia,' in commemoration of her association with Shelley's poetical achievements; and 'Clara' in commemoration of the fact, that Shelley's daughter (born at Marlow on 3rd September, 1817) was named after her mother's sister-by-affinity,—even as Byron's Ada was in her other Christian name styled after her father's half-sister. Described as Clara Mary Constantia Jane in a legal instrument, dated long after Shelley's death, Claire figures as Mary Jane Clairmont in Shelley's last will and testament.

Covering passages of wretchedness, that came to him from grief for his first wife's fate, and from his rage against the Lord Chancellor, Shelley's time at Marlow covered, also, some of the happiest weeks and months of his existence,—weeks and months of exciting literary labour; days spent agreeably with his wife's father; and days passed, with livelier contentment, in the society of Peacock, Hogg, and the Hunts. Now on the water, and now on foot, he took much exercise in the open air. Sometimes by himself and sometimes with his younger friends, he walked to and fro between Marlow and London. In their pedestrian excursions to London (thirty-two miles distant from

the Buckinghamshire village), it was usual for Peacock and Shelley to march to town in the day, stay two nights in the capital, and march back on the third day.

Holding little intercourse with his immediate neighbours of his own degree (who, no doubt, gossiped much, and pumped Mr. Furnivall, the surgeon, with small result, about the ladies and babies of the poetical household), he received visitors from a distance, together with two or three of the Marlow residents, and altogether led a more sociable life than at Bishopgate. His time at Marlow was also a time of great literary productiveness. In it he threw off the Marlow Pamphlets, (a) *A Proposal for putting Reform to the Vote throughout the Kingdom*, and (b) *An Address to the People on the Death of the Princess Charlotte*, and published the *History of a Six Weeks' Tour*—the book that gave Claire her place in the record of English literature as Shelley's and Mrs. Shelley's sister. It was also the period in which he wrote *Laon and Cythna, or the Revolution of the Golden City: A Vision of the Nineteenth Century*. In the *Stanza of Spenser*; wrote the fragmentary *Prince Athanase*, and began *Rosalind and Helen*, the modern eclogue, which he finished in the summer of the following year (1818) at the baths of Lucca,—the three poems which, telling us so much of the poet's romantic view of his own character and career, are so rich in the poetical egotisms, which have been so often handled as though they were reliable passages of unimaginative biography.

In studying the last-named of these poems, the reader will not fail to detect Shelley in Lionel (the name under which the poet figures in *The Boat on the Serchio*), Claire in Rosalind, and Mrs. Shelley in Helen, who says of her lost Lionel,—

‘To Lionel,
Though of great wealth and lineage high,
Yet through those dungeon walls there came
Thy thrilling light, O liberty!
And as the meteor's midnight flame
Startles the dreamer, sun-like truth
Flashed on his visionary youth,
And filled him, not with love, but faith,
And hope, and courage mute in death;
For love and life in him were twins,
Born at one birth.’

It is thus that Shelley, the scion of a middle-class family,

the great-grandson of a Yankee apothecary, boasted of his 'lineage high,' to the admiration of eulogists, who speak disdainfully of Byron's pride in his Norman descent. Of her conjugal union to Lionel—a union effected in accordance with the ways and principles of Free Lovers—Helen says, in terms descriptive of Mary's bondless marriage with her father's familiar friend,—

‘ And so we loved, and did unite
All that in us was yet divided :
For when he said, that many a rite,
By men to bind but once provided,
Could not be shared by him and me,
Or they would kill him in their glee,
I shuddered, and then laughing said—
“ We will have rites our faith to bind,
But our church shall be the starry night,
Our altar the grassy earth outspread,
And our priest the muttering wind.” ’

A very delightful way of being married, no doubt; but in real life, marriages done thus lightly and elegantly, without church or chapel, priest or minister, officer or registrar, sometimes have inconvenient consequences.

Another thing to render *Rosalind and Helen* interesting to students of Shelley's story, is its evidence that Shelley wrote the poem with a hope, that it would tend to draw Mary and Claire still closer together, and weld their hearts into an indissoluble union by the strongest mutual affection. That it was Mary who induced Shelley, at the baths of Lucca in the summer of 1818, to finish the poem which had this obvious purpose, is a part of the evidence that she was then animated by affection for the sister-by-affinity, whom she had so recently styled her 'sister' in a published book. Yet we are assured by Mr. Kegan Paul that, in 1818, Mrs. Shelley 'felt as strongly as Byron that Allegra's mother was the worst person possible to train the child.' Had I not on certain occasions caught Mr. Kegan Paul, passing from clear evidences to strangely erroneous conclusions, I should take it for granted that he had sufficient documentary evidence for so strong and startling a statement. But I am slow to believe that Mrs. Shelley thought so ill of Claire, either at Marlow (where she styled Claire her 'sister' in a published book), or in any term of 1818, prior to the time when she encouraged Shelley to resume work on

Rosalind and Helen. Under the circumstances, I can conceive that Mr. Kegan Paul has inferred too much from some words, penned by Mrs. Shelley, in order to induce Byron to take personal charge of Allegra. In 1817 and 1818, the Shelleys put strong pressure on Byron, to rear Allegra under his own roof and eye, and in doing so declared the strongest opinion that he was the fittest person to have charge of the child. But to argue from any expressions of this opinion, that Mrs. Shelley regarded her 'sister' as a person from whose deleterious influence the child should be preserved, would be alike unjust to the Shelleys and to Claire; it being certain that Shelley wished Byron to receive *both* the mother and the child; that he did his utmost to bring about an arrangement for Claire to have charge of her offspring *under* Byron's roof; and that he strove and hoped to bring about this arrangement, even *after* Allegra's transference to her father's house.

I do not say that Mr. Kegan Paul cannot produce evidence to sustain his staggering statement. On the contrary, I have a feeling that he may be able to do so. But I do not hesitate in saying, that to produce any sufficient documentary evidence of Mrs. Shelley's having written, or thought so ill of Claire in 1817 or 1818, would be to show how little William Godwin knew of his daughter's real character, and to prove that she was the falsest little minx that ever wore petticoats. If, whilst she was bearing herself to the world with every show of sisterly affection for, and confidence in, her *sister* (her 'sister' of the published *Six Weeks' Tour*), Mrs. Shelley ever gave anyone to understand that Claire was unfit to discharge the maternal duties to her own child, she was a woman with two faces and a double tongue.

Enough has been said to show that, in 1817 and the earlier months of 1818, Claire had good reason for thinking she possessed her sister's affection, and that Shelley had reason to believe his wife held Claire in sisterly regard. Enough also has been said to show that throughout this same period Shelley was affectionately disposed to his wife's sister-by-affinity. My strongest evidence that Shelley was so disposed towards Claire has, however, still to be given.

Shelley was still at Bath when he instructed a London lawyer to make the will, which was in due course executed in London on 18th February, 1817, and proved as the poet's last

testament in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury on 1st November, 1844,—more than two-and-twenty years after his death. Lord Byron and Thomas Love Peacock were appointed executors of this will. The testator assigned a sum of 6000*l.* for a provision for his son (Charles Bysshe) by his first wife, another 6000*l.* for a provision for Ianthe (his daughter by the same wife), and a third 6000*l.* for a provision for his son (William) by Mary Godwin; the said three sums of 6000*l.* each being bequeathed to the said Lord Byron and Thomas Love Peacock *In Trust* for the benefit of the said three children. After providing in this manner for his children, the testator (speaking of Claire, under the name of Mary Jane Clairmont) says,—

‘ I give and bequeath unto Mary Jane Clairmont (the sister-in-law of my residuary legatee) the sum of six thousand pounds of like lawful money of Great Britain and I also give and bequeath unto the said George Gordon Lord Byron and Thomas Love Peacock their executors administrators and assigns the sum of six thousand pounds of like lawful money of Great Britain upon trust to lay out and invest the same in their names in purchase of an annuity for the term of the natural life of the said Mary Jane Clairmont and the life of such other person as the said Mary Jane Clairmont shall name (if she please to name one) and to stand possessed of the said annuity and the securities to be obtained for the same upon trust that they the said George Gordon Lord Byron and Thomas Love Peacock and the survivor of them and the executors administrators and assigns of such survivor shall and do during the natural life of the said Mary Jane Clairmont when and as the annuity hereinbefore by me directed to be purchased with the aforesaid sum of six thousand pounds shall be received by my said trustees or the trustee for the time being pay the said annuity into the proper hands of her the said Mary Jane Clairmont or unto her order to be signified by some note or writing under her hand from time to time after the quarterly payment of the same annuity for the payment of which such order shall be given shall have actually become due and payable but not otherwise to the intent that the same annuity may be for the sole and separate use of the said Mary Jane Clairmont independently of any husband with whom she may intermarry and to the intent that the said Mary Jane Clairmont may not either covert or sole make any appointment or assignment by way of anticipation of any unaccrued quarterly payment of the said annuity and the receipt or receipts of the said Mary Jane Clairmont or of the person or persons to whom she shall make such order or appointment as aforesaid shall alone be a good and sufficient discharge for the said annuity or for so much thereof as in such receipt or receipts shall be expressed or acknowledged to be received and from and after the decease of the said Mary Jane Clairmont in case the said annuity shall not then have run out my

said trustees shall then stand possessed thereof in trust for such person or persons as the said Mary Jane Clairmont shall by deed or will appoint to receive the same and in default of appointment in trust for the executors or administrators of the said Mary Jane Clairmont I give and bequeath to Thomas Jefferson Hogg of the Inner Temple London Esquire the sum of two thousand pounds of like lawful money of Great Britain I give and bequeath unto the said George Gordon Lord Byron the sum of two thousand pounds of like lawful money of Great Britain I give and bequeath unto the said Thomas Love Peacock the sum of five hundred pounds of like lawful money of Great Britain I give and bequeath unto the said George Gordon Lord Byron and Thomas Love Peacock their executors administrators and assigns the sum of two thousand pounds of like lawful money of Great Britain upon trust to lay out and invest the same in their names in the purchase of annuity payable quarterly for the term of the natural life of the said Thomas Love Peacock and the life of such other person as the said Thomas Love Peacock shall name (if he please to name one) and to stand possessed of the said annuity and the securities to be obtained for the same upon trust that they the said George Gordon Lord Byron and Thomas Love Peacock and the survivor of them and the executors administrators and assigns of such survivor shall and do during the natural life of the said Thomas Love Peacock when and as the annuity hereinbefore by me directed to be purchased with the aforesaid sum of two thousand pounds shall be received by my said trustees or the trustee for the time being pay the same annuity into the proper hands of the said Thomas Love Peacock or unto his order to be signified by some note or writing under his hand from time to time after the quarterly payment of the same annuity for the payment of which such order shall be given shall have actually become due and payable but not otherwise to the intent that the said Thomas Love Peacock may not make any appointment or assignment by way of anticipation of any unaccrued quarterly payment of the said annuity and from and after the decease of the said Thomas Love Peacock in case the said annuity shall not then have run out my said trustees shall stand possessed thereof in trust for such person or persons as the said Thomas Love Peacock shall by deed or will appoint to receive the same and in default of appointment in trust for the executors or administrators of the said Thomas Love Peacock and I do hereby give devise and bequeath all and singular my manors messuages lands tenements hereditaments and real estate whatsoever and wheresoever situate both freehold and copyhold and whether in possession reversion remainder or expectancy and over which I have any disposing power and also all and singular my monies stocks funds and securities for money mortgages in fee and for years and the lands tenements and hereditaments therein comprised for all my estate and interest therein and all other my goods chattels and personal estate and effects whatsoever and wheresoever (but subject nevertheless and charged and chargeable as well my said real as personal

estate with the payment of all my just debts funeral and testamentary expenses and the legacies given by this my Will and also such legacies as I may hereafter give by any Codicil or Codicils thereto) unto and to the use of my wife Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley her heirs executors administrators and assigns for her and their own absolute use and benefit for ever Provided always and my will is and I do hereby expressly declare that the several legacies hereinbefore by me given shall not be paid or payable until my said wife Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley her heirs or assigns shall be in the possession of my real estate under the devise to her and them hereinbefore contained and in that case if my said wife Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley shall regularly pay the interest of the several legacies after she obtains possession of my said real estate such legacies may remain unpaid for any time not exceeding the term of four years at the option of my said wife Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley.'

Shelley assigned 6000*l.* to each of his three children, living at the time when he made the will ; he bequeathed the same sum (6000*l.*) to Claire, to be paid into her hands for her to deal with according to her pleasure. Had he done nothing more for her by his will, he would have dealt with her in the testament precisely as he dealt with his own children ;—a sufficient proof that he felt more than an ordinary brother's love for her. But in addition to this large legacy, he left her another 6000*l.*, to be invested in an annuity for the term of her natural life, or for the lives of herself and 'such other person' as she should name. There is small room for doubt that, in making this direction, Shelley had Allegra in his mind, as the person whom Claire would name as her co-parcener in the annuity. I have no doubt that he wished to provide for her child even as he provided for each of his own children, and saw that to do so directly and openly, with mention of the child's name, he must use language that would publish to the world one side of the child's parentage, and, whilst exposing the mother to discredit, would raise a suspicion that he was the child's father. Anyhow, he left Claire 12,000*l.* (say, a sixth or seventh of all he had to will away). A father and husband with three living children, and the prospect of having more children, he bequeathed this large sum to his wife's 'sister'; and yet we have been asked to believe that, at the time of making this bequest, he disliked Claire!

A good example of the inaccuracy with which Trelawny, in his old age, used to gossip of Shelley and his affairs, is afforded by what he said to Mr. Rossetti of this double legacy to Claire.

In his *Talks with Trelawny*, vide the *Athenæum*, 1882, Mr. Rossetti remarked, 'Trelawny says that Shelley left Miss Clairmont, by will, no less a sum than 12,000*l.* He had left 6000*l.* in the body of the will, and then (whether by inadvertence or otherwise) he bequeathed another 6000*l.* in a codicil.' There is no codicil to Shelley's will. Both bequests were made in the body of the will. Inadvertence was in no degree accountable for the two several bequests. Quarrelling bitterly with Claire after her husband's death on other matters, Mrs. Shelley also quarrelled with her bitterly about these bequests,—maintaining that Shelley never intended to leave her more than 6000*l.*; insisting that a lawyer's blunder was the cause of the enormity of the sum bequeathed to Claire; and arguing that Claire was bound in honour to forego the legacy of 6000*l.* and be content with the annuity,—a view of the case not taken by Claire. No lawyer will think a mistake was made by Shelley's solicitor, or question that Shelley (a subtle user and reader of words, and a man by no means without aptitude for affairs of business) intended to bequeath both sums. The notion that he was guilty of inadvertence, and slipt in the matter through his lawyer's blundering, is absurd.

There is, however, reason for thinking that Claire took more by the will than Shelley in his last months intended her to take by his last testament. That Mrs. Shelley had grounds for saying he meant to reduce some of the legacies of the will, and otherwise alter the instrument, I do not question. Believing that he made the second bequest of 6000*l.* mainly for Allegra's benefit, I think it probable that, after Allegra's death, in April, 1822, he intended to revoke the bequest for the purchase of the annuity. But he died without altering his will in any way. Hence, unless he told her of his intention to revoke the second legacy, or left clear evidence of his intention to do so, Claire was entitled in honour no less than in law to both legacies.

Anyhow, it is certain that on 18th February, 1817,—the February next following Allegra's birth, and her mother's residence with Byron and the Shelleys in Geneva—Shelley made the will in which he bequeathed to Claire, out of his moderate estate, no less than 12,000*l.* Is not this strong evidence of his affection and esteem for her? Is it conceivable that he would have left Claire so much money had he and Mary concurred in cordially disliking her? Mr. Froude insists

that, regarding Claire with disapproval and aversion when they accompanied her to Geneva, they were no less unfavourably disposed to her, when they sheltered her at Bath and gave her bed and board at Marlow. Here are Mr. Froude's words:—

‘The Shelleys, who had disliked her before, could not have been more favourably disposed to her; but they pitied her misfortunes, and allowed her to continue to reside with them.’

It is due to Mr. Froude to say that, when writing these words, he had not seen Shelley's will; but he had before him my clear account of Shelley's affectionate regard for Claire. He chose to deviate from my clear account, and to rely on the statements of other persons, and he must take the consequences of his imprudence.

CHAPTER XIII.

LAON AND CYTHNA.

Origin of the Free-Contract Party—Divorce in Catholic England—Nullification of Marriage—Consequences of the Reformation—Edward the Sixth's Commissioners for the Amendment of Ecclesiastical Laws—Martin Bucer's *Judgment touching Divorce*—John Milton on Freedom of Divorce—Denunciations of Marriage by the Godwinian Radicals—Poetical Fruits of the Genevese Scandal—Byron's Timidity—Shelley's Boldness—His most extravagant Conclusions touching Liberty of Affection—Appalling Doctrine of *Laon and Cythna*—Shelley's Purpose in publishing the Poem—Alarm of the Olliers—Shelley's Instructions to the frightened Publishers—Suppression of the monstrous Poem—Friends in Council—*Laon and Cythna* manipulated into the *Revolt of Islam*—The *Quarterly Review* on the original Poem—Consequences to Shelley's Reputation—Irony of Fate.

ENOUGH has been said of the egotisms of *Laon and Cythna*; but something must be said of the reasons, why this extraordinary fruit of Shelley's genius should be withheld from those young people to whom it is now-a-days offered, in fine type and on rich paper, as one of the choicest poems of English literature. It must be stated frankly and fearlessly why, till human nature has changed greatly and till existing human institutions and sentiments have become mere matters of archæology, this poem, with all its exquisite beauties of diction, must appear to all righteous and sober-minded persons a perplexity and a scandal, that may be fruitful of morbid thought and vicious action in young persons of light fancy and loose principles.

Successive writers on Shelleyan questions have regarded the Free Contract movement, in which the poet took so characteristic a part, as one of the consequences of the great revolution which, towards the close of the last century, disposed a considerable proportion of our own people, as well as of the peoples more deeply and violently influenced by novel ideas, to refer all social evils to existing institutions, and, in their impatience of prevailing wrongs and wretchedness, to cry aloud for the quick and total suppression of the social arrangements to which they

attributed so much mischief and misery. But the French Revolution did no more, in this respect, than quicken a discontent and stimulate a movement that had affected English life for generations and centuries. To discover the origin of the Free Contract party in this country the student of social phenomena must go back to the sixteenth century.

In pre-Reformation times, living under the control of a Church that, knowing nothing of the larger divorce (*a vinculo matrimonii* = from bond of matrimony), and granting only in cases of extreme conjugal infidelity the minor divorce (*a mensâ et thoro* = from board and bed), subsequently designated 'judicial separation,' which afforded no liberty of marrying other spouses to the separated parties, our forefathers in this island enjoyed practically a freedom of divorce, that under ordinary circumstances enabled unhappily mated spouses to make lawful marriage with other persons.

Knowing nothing of the complete divorce, the Church knew a great deal of nullification of matrimony, and in her Courts throughout the country was daily liberating uncongenial spouses, by decreeing that they had never been man and wife. By discovering that they were first, second, or third cousins,—by demonstrating, with the aid of two conveniently pliant witnesses, that, at the time of their wedding, one of them was pre-contracted to a third person,—by showing that on their marriage-day they stood within the prohibited degrees of consanguinity, affinity or spiritual affinity,—or by a confession that either of them had, before their union, held wicked intercourse with a near relation of the other,—a husband and wife could procure a judgment which declared they had *never been married*; that they were still bachelor and single woman, and free to contract matrimony in accordance with the rules of Holy Church. To a couple bent on perfect liberation from a hateful union, it was always easy to discover grounds for the nullification of their wedlock, and seldom difficult to render those grounds apparent to an ecclesiastical judge. Two spouses, bent on celebrating their union, often experienced great difficulty in ascertaining that no impediments precluded them from valid intermarriage; but the impediment which made their wedlock a nullity, were always readily discoverable by the husband and wife who had come to hate one another. So long as this state of things lasted, every canonical impediment to matrimony operated like a turnstile gate, that,

whilst acting as a barrier to persons entering a building, affords a means of egress to those who wish to leave it.

This state of things, however, came to an end with the Reformation. By sweeping away all the canonical restrictions on matrimony, not ordered by Scripture, the statute, 32 Henry VIII., c. 38, increased greatly the freedom of marriage; but at the same time destroyed the liberty of divorce enjoyed by our ancestors throughout successive centuries. Rendering matrimony easier of entrance, it closed all the many gates, which had hitherto afforded spouses the means of escape from conjugal wretchedness. The chiefs of the Protestant party in Edward the Sixth's time had, however, no wish to perpetuate the condition of affairs, directly consequent on Henry the Eighth's mere abrogation of the non-scriptural impediments to marriage. Condemning strongly the excessive liberty of separation, which the ecclesiastical tribunals had for generations afforded to society, they were no less unanimous in condemning the doctrine of the absolute indissolubility of wedlock. If it was wrong on the one hand to allow husbands and wives the liberty of separating on frivolous pretexts, and to provide the fortress of marriage with numerous gates of egress, whose double locks obeyed the pass-keys of perjury and corruption; it was on the other hand no less hurtful to society and impious to God, to constrain a pair of human creatures, in the name of religion, to persevere in an association, that could not accomplish the highest purposes of matrimony, and debarred the ill-assorted couple from the serene and wholesome pleasures of Christian life. These were the views of the Anglican leaders; views that found precise and memorable expression in the famous code of ordinances (the *Reformatio Legum Ecclesiasticarum*) prepared for the reformation of our ecclesiastical laws by Edward the Sixth's thirty-two commissioners for that purpose, who, doing away with the minor divorce (*a mensâ et thoro*), decided that the divorce *a vinculo matrimonii* should be the only kind of matrimonial severance known to English law, and that it should be granted, (1) in cases of extreme conjugal faithlessness; (2) in cases where a husband, not guilty of deserting his wife, had been for several years absent from her, under circumstances which justified her in concluding that he was dead; (3) and in cases of such violent hatred as rendered it in the highest degree improbable, that the husband and wife would survive their

animosities and again love one another; it being expressly directed that this last provision should not be construed as affecting spouses whose quarrels, though frequent and distressing, were neither incessant nor in the highest degree vehement. Had Edward the Sixth lived only a little longer these ordinances would have become the law of the land;—law which, though suppressed on the accession of Mary Tudor, would have been revived on the rise of Elizabeth, and handed down to the present time.

Of course, the Anglican reformers conceived themselves to be justified in disregarding the limitation, which our version of the Scriptures assigns to liberty of divorce. Whilst some of them were of opinion that this limitation was applicable only to the Jews, others held that, if a wrong rendering of a particular word were replaced by its true English equivalent, Scripture would be found to sanction the dissolution of marriages, whose infelicity was due to nothing more than some serious mental or moral disability. Of course, also, the Commissioners' recommendations were a compromise between the requirements of bold reformers who wished for a much larger, and of timid reformers, who would have preferred a smaller, measure of freedom of divorce. Had Martin Bucer been on the Commission, as he certainly would have been but for his recent death, it cannot be questioned that the Commissioners would have ordained a far greater liberty of dissolving unhappy marriages. It was Bucer's opinion (*vide* his *Judgment touching Ditorce*, addressed to Edward the Sixth) that every marriage should be dissolved in which the husband and wife did not 'love one another to the height of dearness,' or the husband could not rightly govern and cherish the wife, or the wife was flagrantly disobedient and unprofitable to her lord, or either party 'defrauded the other of conjugal benevolence,'—views which commended themselves so cordially to John Milton, that he produced a new edition of Bucer's tract, in the middle of the seventeenth century.

Whilst showing how cordially he concurred in Martin Bucer's conclusions, John Milton's four works on divorce—the *Doctrine and Discipline of Ditorce*, the *Tetrachordon*, the *Colasterion*, and the new edition of Bucer's *Judgment touching Ditorce*—show also how far he went beyond the sixteenth-century divine, in declaring every man's right to secede from

an uncongenial partner, and to associate himself with an acceptable helpmate. No libertine, for the gratification of vile desire, ever demanded greater license of re-marriage than Milton, in the name of religion, demanded for Christian men, for their spiritual advantage.

The old canon law, which insisted on the indissolubility of true marriages, and, even in cases of adultery, afforded no larger divorce than the separation from board and bed, having been revived at the close of Elizabeth's reign, our ancestors lived for several generations under a matrimonial law of unprecedented rigour and narrowness, that in its results demonstrated the sagacity and prudence of Edward the Sixth's Commissioners. Had the Commissioners' proposals become law, England would have escaped much of the profligacy that, after rendering her seventeenth century proverbial for domestic libertinism, was less remarkable in the eighteenth century, only because the usage of successive ages had rendered society comparatively indifferent to it. Whilst no student of our social history can question that throughout those centuries the English home suffered severely from the excessive stringency of the matrimonial law, every student of literature is cognizant of the stream of written protests against the harshness and unyielding rigour of that law, from Elizabeth to Victoria. That Milton shocked the lighter people of his time by his assaults on the limitations of liberty of divorce is not to be conceived. That he did not by his writings against those restrictions offend the more precise and God-fearing of his contemporaries, appears from the regard in which they held him as a religious poet, after his descent to darkness and evil days. So far as concerns freedom of divorce, the Free Contract party of William Godwin's epoch required nothing that Milton would not have granted, and urged little that Bucer would have hesitated to approve.

In 1813 (the year in which the anti-matrimonial note of *Queen Mab* was written), Shelley regarded marriage with the eyes and by the lights of eighteenth-century writers, who decried the institution as the source of human misery and depravation. The evils, that caused these writers to distinguish themselves in the long war against wedlock, were no imaginary grievances. On the contrary, they were evils which the Anglican reformers foresaw would result from a too stringent marriage-law, and for which they wished to provide by their

proposals for divorce. They were evils crying aloud for remedy throughout the country. Almost every parish of the land had a miserably mated couple, whose union should have been terminated by the law. For the mischief there was no remedy but the old cumbrous and costly proceedings for obtaining the greater divorce,—*i.e.* the suit in the first instance in the Ecclesiastical Court for the minor divorce from board and bed, and the subsequent suit for the parliamentary severance of the bond of marriage:—a process that, making divorce the luxury of the rich, denied it altogether to the poor. In the first thirty-seven years of the present century, only seventy suitors (less than two a-year) obtained special parliamentary enactments for their liberation from wretched wedlock. In the last thirty-seven years of the previous century, such divorces were much less frequent. The rich alone could afford to pay for the parliamentary relief. For the poor, and for the people raised only a few degrees above poverty, there was no divorce. Under these circumstances, whilst almost every rural village had a Stephen Blackpool, there necessarily arose vehement discontent not only with the defective marriage-law, but with marriage itself. Nothing was said against the obstacles to entering marriage; but everywhere an outcry was heard against the impossibility of getting out of marriage. Amongst the populace, social sentiment permitted a man in many cases to be the physician of his own trouble, and after deserting his lawful wife, to live with a woman who was not his wife. The general grievance being the difficulty of escape from uncongenial wedlock, the Radical writers dealt with this grievance, and usually forbore to criticise the impediments to marriage, of which no large number of people complained.

Taking his views from these writers, it was natural for the youthful Shelley to think and write chiefly of the evils arising from the law, which forbade a man to leave his wife and straightway attach himself to another woman. In constructing the note to *Queen Mab*, it was enough for him to put together, with no common smartness and one or two original touches, the remarks of previous writers on the troubles resulting from the permanence of matrimonial obligations. Contemning marriage from his boyhood, after the fashion of his teachers, he was eloquent about the difficulty of escaping from it. Apart from a statement of the grand principle that 'love was free,' and

that every person should be at liberty to marry whomsoever he pleased, he does not seem to have troubled himself about the divers impediments to the first entrance into the unendurable bondage, before he went to Geneva. It was otherwise on his return from the residence in Switzerland with Byron.

The startling discovery, that they were believed to be living in incestuous intimacy with the same two women, caused each of the poets to ponder the nature of the crime with which rumour charged them. Stirring and fascinating Byron's imagination, the scandal bore fruit in *Manfred* and *Cain*. Stimulating and holding Shelley's fancy, it resulted in *Laon and Cythna*. It is interesting to observe how differently the two poets dealt with the same repulsive subject. For the timid sceptic and half-hearted innovator, who to the last was (as Shelley put the case to his wife at Pisa) 'little better than a Christian,' it was enough to point to the crime in *Manfred*, as one of the hideous possibilities of vicious desire,—as a monstrous and appalling extravagance of wickedness, too hideous to be spoken of precisely; as an offence so loathsome and revolting, that poetry could refer to it only by vague hints and obscure suggestions. In *Cain* he could refer with cynical mockery to times when, if *Genesis* were true, brothers necessarily mated with their sisters, for the accomplishment of the Creator's purpose;—mockery, that was not so much a palliation of the iniquity, as an assault on the credibility of the Book which seemed to sanction the wickedness.

Shelley handled the subject in a very different way. It was natural for the thorough and unwavering disbeliever, who had formerly denied and still questioned the existence of the Deity, and no less natural for the fervid political theorist, who regarded all human governments and their subordinate institutions as the mere contrivances of tyranny for the subjugation and debasement of the peoples, to come to the conclusion that the impediments to matrimony had no other foundation, and were in no degree more entitled to the respect of reasonable men, than the impediments to escape from wedlock. Absolutely ignorant of the social conditions from which the hindrances to marriage had arisen, and no less ignorant of the physical and social reasons for regarding most of them as conducive to domestic purity, and some of them as needful for preserving the human species from mental and bodily disease and deterio-

ration, Shelley was only carrying certain of his principles to certain of their extreme logical conclusions, when he closed his consideration of the impediments to marriage, by regarding them as so many capricious and pernicious interferences with natural forces, which, if they were left to take their own course, without let or hindrance from presumptuous, and arrogant, and meddlesome mortals, would in due course bring the whole human race under the dominion of universal love;—a dominion under which all mankind for countless ages would have enjoyed unqualified felicity, had it not been for the disastrous activity of tyrants and priests.

It was not in Shelley to distinguish between the various impediments, and discover grounds for deciding that some of them should be retained, whilst others might be abolished. To Shelley, a man's right to marry his deceased wife's sister was not more obvious than a man's right to marry his own sister. Regarded by the new light, arising from the larger consideration of the matrimonial law, to which he had been incited by the Genevese scandal, the artificial hindrances to egress from matrimony were not more demoralizing than the artificial hindrances to ingress into matrimony. For human happiness marriage must be relieved of the impediments on its one side, no less than of the hindrances on its other side. Love must be restored to Freedom:—to freedom so perfect that a young man would be free to marry his own sister, without the intervention of priest or the control of lawyer; and after wearying of her be free to marry her younger sister under circumstances in no way affecting his freedom in the future. This discovery was the completion of Shelley's social philosophy in respect to the intercourse of the sexes;—the philosophy that is, in the opinion of some of his admirers, a part of his title to be regarded as a man, who, under auspicious circumstances, 'might have been the Saviour of the World!'

Having made this important discovery after his return from Geneva, Shelley determined to communicate it to the world in a poem, which should teach its readers that incest was nothing but an imaginary sin; that ceasing to have the show of sin, on being rightly regarded, it was seen to be compatible with the highest virtue; that it was one of the great 'multitude of artificial vices,' to whose existence the fewness of 'real virtues'

was referable; that instead of being loathsome, nauseous, hideous, unutterably repulsive and sinful, the conjugal union of a brother and sister under the Free Contract was permissible in the eyes of philosophic moralists, and compatible with moral purity and the finest delicacy in the brother and sister; that besides being altogether permissible, and in no degree reprehensible, this conjugal union was a virtuous relation, in which brothers and sisters would often stand towards one another in a rightly-constituted society. To put this social doctrine before the world, in the form most likely to commend it to the feelings of youthful readers, and induce them to further every movement for a state of things, in which brothers and sisters could so live together without offending their neighbours, Shelley wrote *Laon and Cythna: or, The Revolution of the Golden City: a Vision of the Nineteenth Century. In the Stanza of Spenser.*

Brother and sister of the same parents, Laon and Cythna, the hero and heroine of the poem, are beings endowed with all the virtues conceivable in perfect human nature, and are still enjoying the scenes of their childhood in Argolis, when they pass from the state of mutual affection, that is desirable in a brother of some sixteen or eighteen summers and a sister (*ætat.* 12), to a state of mutual love that is desirable only between young people who can in the ordinary course of things marry one another. What follows from this state of things is indicated with consummate delicacy by the poet, too wary and artful to shock his readers in the second canto by clear disclosures, that might determine them to refrain from perusing any later canto of a long poem. Laon and Cythna are suddenly torn asunder by the agents of the tyrant, who figures in the poem as a type of European monarchs in the nineteenth century, and soon after their severance Cythna gives birth to the lovely child who owes her life to Laon. In a later passage of the narrative, after he has been released from the cage on the column's top, and she, after divers painful experiences, has been proclaimed the prophetess and supreme directress of the revolutionists of the Golden City, Laon and Cythna come together under circumstances, which prevent them from recognizing one another in the first hour of their reunion. Laon is still uncertain whether she is really his sister, or only bears a strong resemblance to her, when he

hears Cythna harangue the Golden City revolutionists in these words :—

‘ My brethren, we are free ! the plains and mountains,
The grey sea shore, the forests and the fountains,
Are haunts of happiest dwellers ;—man and woman,
Their common bondage burst, may freely borrow
From *lawless love* a solace for their sorrow ;
For oft we still must weep, since we are human.

A stormy night’s serenest morrow,
Whose showers are pity’s gentle tears,
Whose clouds are smiles of those that die
Like infants without hopes or fears,
And whose beams are joys that lie
In blended hearts, now holds dominion ;
The dawn of mind, which upwards on a pinion
Borne, swift as sun-rise, far illumines space,
And clasps this barren world in its own bright embrace !’

Fearful that the words ‘lawless love’ may frighten simple readers, Mr. Buxton Forman (who thinks Shelley ‘might have been the Saviour of the World’), in his most useful edition of Shelley’s works, appends to the alarming words this note :—
‘The words *lawless love* seem to be used, not in a conventional sense, but merely to signify *unshackled love*.’ True, but ‘unshackled’ from what? Cythna meant that tyrant custom, or tyrant anybody else, having been overthrown and rendered powerless for the moment, her brethren and sisters were free to marry, and changing about to remarry, in perfect liberty of affection—in love liberated from *the shackles of human law*—in matrimony, no less easily entered than easily quitted—in marriage, alike free from legal impediments to ingress, and from legal impediments to egress—love, in fact, so perfectly free from the supervision and control of human law, that it might be rightly styled ‘lawless love.’

Later in the poem’s story, when Cythna has rescued Laon from the tyrant’s soldiers, and carried him off, on the ‘black Tartarian horse of giant frame,’ to a picturesque ruin, the brother and sister, after recognizing one another as whilom playmates in Argolis, pass through emotions, that are set forth in the following stanzas :—

‘ The autumnal winds, as if spell-bound, had made
A natural couch of leaves in that recess,
Which seasons none disturb, but in the shade
Of flowering parasites, did Spring love to dress

With their sweet blooms the wintry loneliness
 Of those dead leaves, shedding their stars, whene'er
 The wandering wind her nurslings might caress ;
 Whose intertwining fingers ever there,
 Made music wild and soft that filled the listening air.

We know not where we go, or what sweet dream
 May pilot us thro' caverns strange and fair
 Of far and pathless passion, while the stream
 Of life, our bark doth on its whirlpools bear,
 Spreading swift wings as sails to the dim air ;
 Nor should we seek to know, so the devotion
 Of love and gentle thoughts be heard still there
 Louder and louder from the utmost Ocean
 Of universal life, attuning its commotion.

To the pure all things are pure ! Oblivion wrapt
 Our spirits, and the fearful overthrow
 Of public hope was from our being snapt,
 Tho' linkèd years had bound it there ; for now
 A power, a thirst, a knowledge, which below
 All thoughts, like light beyond the atmosphere,
 Clothing its clouds with grace, doth ever flow,
 Came on us, as we sate in silence there,
 Beneath the golden stars of the clear azure air.

In silence which doth follow talk that causes
 The baffled heart to speak with sighs and tears,
 When wildering passion, swalloweth up the pauses
 Of inexpressive speech :—the youthful years
 Which we together past, their hopes and fears,
The common blood which ran within our frames,
That likeness of the features which endears
The thoughts expressed by them, our very names,
 And all the wingèd hours which speechless memory claims

Had found a voice ;

* * * * *

The meteor shewed the leaves on which we sate,
 And Cythna's glowing arms, and the thick ties
 Of her soft hair which bent with gathered weight
 My neck near hers, her dark and deepening eyes,
 Which, as twin phantoms of one star that lies
 O'er a dim well, move, though the star reposes,
 Swam in our mute and liquid ecstasies,
 Her marble brow, and eager lips, like roses,
 With their own fragrance pale, which Spring but half uncloses.

The meteor to its far morass returned :
 The beating of our veins one interval
 Made still ; and then I felt the blood that burned
 Within her frame, mingle with mine, and fall
 Around my heart like fire ; and over all
 A mist was spread, the sickness of a deep
 And speechless swoon of joy, as might befall
 Two disunited spirits when they leap
 In union from this earth's obscure and fading sleep.

Was it one moment that confounded thus
 All thought, all sense, all feeling, into one
 Unutterable power, which shielded us
 Even from our own cold looks, when we had gone
 Into a wide and wild oblivion
 Of tumult and of tenderness ? or now
 Had ages, such as make the moon and sun,
 The seasons, and mankind their changes know,
 Left fear and time unfelt by us alone below ?

I know not. What are kisses whose fire clasps
 The failing heart in languishment, or limb
 Twined within limb ? or the quick dying gasps
 Of the life meeting, when the faint eyes swim
 Thro' tears of a wide mist boundless and dim,
 In one caress ? What is the strong controul
 Which leads the heart that dizzy steep to climb,
 Where far over the world those vapours roll
 Which blend two restless frames in one reposing soul ?

It is the shadow which doth float unseen,
 But not unfelt, o'er blind mortality,
 Whose divine darkness fled not, from that green
 And lone recess, where lapt in peace did lie
 Our linkèd frames ; till, from the changing sky,
 That night and still another day had fled ;
 And then I saw and felt. The moon was high,
 The clouds, as of coming storm, were spread
 Under its orb,—loud winds were gathering overhead.

Cythna's sweet lips seemed lurid in the moon,
 Her fairest limbs with the night wind were chill,
 And her dark tresses were all loosely strewn
 O'er her pale bosom :—all within was still,
 And the sweet peace of joy did almost fill
 The depth of her unfathomable look :—
 And we sate calmly, though that rocky hill,
 The waves contending in its caverns strook,
 For they foreknew the storm, and the grey ruin shook.

There we unheeding sate, in the communion
 Of interchangèd vows, which, with a rite
 Of faith most sweet and sacred, stamped our union.—
 Few were the living hearts which could unite
 Like ours, or celebrate a bridal night
 With such close sympathies, for to each other
 Had high and solemn hopes, the gentle might
 Of earliest love, and all the thoughts which smother
 Cold Evil's power, now linked a sister and a brother.'

At the poem's close, in reward for all their good deeds in a naughty world, and all their pains of self-sacrifice for the promotion of human happiness, this brother and sister (after death), together with the charming child, who is the issue of their incestuous embraces, are permitted to enter the boat of hollow pearl, in which they are carried to the islands of the blest, to repose in everlasting felicity near 'The Temple of the Spirit.'

Lest it should be said that I misrepresent the story in a particular, which, though important, affects in no way the poem's principal doctrine, let it be observed that to some readers this charming child appears to have been the tyrant's daughter, instead of Laon's offspring. Sir John Taylor Coleridge's memorable article in the *Quarterly Review* shows that, whilst recognizing with repugnance, the incest of Laon's intercourse with his sister, he regarded the child as the issue of the despot's passion. But on this point I conceive the reviewer to have erred through the mystifications and ambiguities of the narrative. To me it is clear that Shelley meant to intimate to careful readers of the monstrous story, that Cythna's child was Laon's daughter. The question, however, does not touch the poem's main purpose, as offspring would be the natural sequence of the endearments interchanged by the brother and sister in the picturesque ruin.

The two actors of the poem, in whom it is sought to interest the reader most strongly, and for whose stainless purity and unqualified goodness the author solicits our admiration, are a brother and sister, whose embraces result in the birth of a little girl, no less lovely in person and mind than her parents. The main purpose of the poem, which has numerous subordinate and minor objects, is to plant the incestuous pair in the reader's affection, and lure him into regarding so exemplary an instance

of conjugal affection with sympathy and approval. By some of the less daring of the Shelleyan zealots it has indeed been urged that *Laon and Cythna* should be regarded as a mere poetic 'vision' (as it is described on the title-page), and the pure outgrowth of exuberant fancy, and *not* as a serious contribution to social philosophy, intended to influence the judgment and conduct of its readers. To this plea a sufficient answer is found in the pains taken by Shelley to provide the work with a carefully worded prose preface, in which he intimated, that the poem was addressed to persons thirsting 'for a happier condition of moral and political society;' that the hurtful institutions and principles assailed in the poem were the hurtful institutions and principles then dominant in European society, and especially of English society; that the doctrines of the poem were offered for the solution of the various religious problems, political problems, and economical problems, then holding the attention and troubling the minds of earnest philanthropists; that, notwithstanding its artistic form and beauty, the poem *was* offered as a serious contribution to political and social philosophy, and had been written with a view to practical results in human conduct.

By others of the less courageous of the Shelleyan zealots, it is urged that, instead of definitely recommending conjugal love between a brother and a sister as a relation to be countenanced, or even tolerated by England in the nineteenth century, *Laon and Cythna* merely reminds readers that, instead of violating any principle of natural morals, the connubial intercourse of a brother and sister would be unobjectionable, and might even be positively virtuous, in a country whose laws either encourage or only permit such an association. This apology for the prime doctrine of *Laon and Cythna* may as well be considered in connexion with what the poet says on the subject in the last sentence of *the* preface, which runs thus:—

'In the personal conduct of my Hero and Heroine, there is one circumstance which *was* intended to startle the reader from the trance of ordinary life. It *was* my object to break through the crust of those outworn opinions on which established institutions depend. I have appealed therefore to the most universal of all feelings, and have endeavored to strengthen the moral sense, by forbidding it to waste its energies in seeking to avoid actions *which are only crimes of convention*. It is because there is so great a multitude of artificial vices,

that there are so few real virtues. Those feelings alone *which are benevolent or malevolent, are essentially good or bad. The circumstance of which I speak, was introduced, however, merely to accustom men to that charity and toleration which the exhibition of a practice widely differing from their own, has a tendency to promote.* Nothing indeed can be more mischievous, than many actions innocent in themselves, which might bring down upon individuals the bigotted contempt and rage of the multitude.'

To this last sentence of the preface to *Laon and Cythna*, Shelley (obviously by an after-thought, and in consequence of the pressure put upon him by some friend or friends) appended this foot-note—'The sentiments connected with and characteristic of this circumstance have no personal reference to the writer' !!!

The last paragraph of the preface to *Laon and Cythna* is preceded by these words, 'Love is celebrated everywhere as the sole law which should govern the moral world.' Having regard to the abrupt transition from the present to the past tense, the significant difference (in style) of the last paragraph from the preceding paragraph, and the known conflict that occurred between the author and publisher before the poem had passed the press, few critical readers will decline to think with me that the last paragraph, instead of being part of the preface when it left Shelley's pen, was an after-thought, written to meet Ollier's objections to the incestuous relation of Laon and Cythna. Nor will it, I think, be questioned, that the astounding note was an after-thought *to* the after-thought, and was put at the foot of the last paragraph, because Ollier, or Hunt, or Peacock, pointed out to the author that the poem, commending the incest of brother and sister, would expose him to the most hideous of imputations.

But what do the statements of the last paragraph amount to? (1) That in making Laon and Cythna live like a married couple, the poet merely aimed at startling his readers out of the trance of ordinary life.—(2) That in so startling his readers he wished to enable them to break away from the notion, that there was something inherently vicious in a brother's connubial association with his own sister.—(3) That Shelley rated such incest as a mere crime of convention, to be placed in the same category with offences against the game-laws, the excise-laws, or a custom's tariff.—(4) That feelings should not be judged by

their results, but by their effect on the disposition of the person entertaining them.—(5) That in so startling his readers out of an antiquated repugnance to the particular kind of incest, he hoped to render them tolerant of, and charitable towards, persons committing the mere offence against conventional morality.—(6) That though, in his opinion, no rule of natural morals forbade a man to marry his own sister, the poet thought his readers had better refrain from such incest, since, though *innocent in itself*, the perpetration of it would be likely to infuriate the bigoted multitude. This from the man who, according to his most fervid idolaters, would have redeemed the world from sin and wretchedness, had he worked for its regeneration under auspicious circumstances.

Is the incest of brother and sister a mere crime of convention? The science of morals, of course, is progressive. What is virtue in a rude state of society becomes crime in a high state of civilization. Some countries, lying well within the wide and vague boundaries of civilization, are behind other countries in the science of morals. What is crime in England may be honesty in Thibet. There are offences about which we may hesitate to say off-hand, whether they are offences against natural morals or mere crimes of convention. But surely action that is maleficent to the mental and physical welfare of mankind, wherever it may be practised, is not action about which there can be any uncertainty. Permitted in the country, where (by his own confession in prose) he commended it to tolerance and charitable consideration, the license commended by Shelley would poison the springs of domestic virtue, whilst producing its universal results on the bodily shape, nervous force, and moral health of the people. Permitted amongst the settlers on a barbarous coast, it would in a few generations be fruitful of such physical infirmity and debasement, as are ever accompanied with moral depravation. Action so universally maleficent is universally wicked. Though it may be less mischievous in its consequences, the conduct recommended in *Laon and Cythna* is no less essentially wicked, in a small and thinly populated island, than in a great city.

The poem having been written to the last line, Shelley sent it to Messrs. C. and J. Ollier, of Welbeck Street, whom he had selected for his publishers, at the request of their friend Leigh Hunt. As the book was to be produced at Shelley's cost, the

publishers of course wished to publish it. But these gentlemen looked for money, instead of disaster, from business with their client. On finding that the poem was an apology for incest, they took counsel with one another, and probably with their lawyer. The result was that, when the poem was nearly, if not altogether printed, one of the Messrs. Ollier wrote to Shelley, stating they could not venture to produce a work, so certain to put them in an ignominious position. Instead of feeling for the men of business, and shrinking from the thought of injuring them, Shelley urged them to go on in the road to ruin. But the publishers were less manageable than Shelley hoped to find them. They repeated their wish to be quit of so dangerous a book. Whereupon, dating from Marlow, on 11th December, 1817, Shelley wrote *the* Mr. Ollier (who was attending to the matter) a letter that contained these words,—

‘There is one compromise you might make, though that would still be injurious to me. Sherwood and Neely wished to be the principal publishers. Call on them, and say that it was through a mistake that you undertook the principal direction of the book, as it was my wish that it should be theirs, and that I have written to you to that effect. This, if it would be advantageous to you, would be detrimental to, but not utterly destructive of, my views. To withdraw your name entirely, would be to inflict on me a bitter and undeserved injury.’ (*Vide Shelley Memorials.*)

To see the nature of this advice, readers must remember how usual it was in former time for several different firms of booksellers to be concerned in the publication of the same work. The principal publisher in these joint-enterprises,—*i.e.* the publisher in negotiation with the author, and to whom the author looked as *his* publisher—had the direction of, and chief responsibility in, the business. His name, or the name of his house, appeared on the title-page before the names of the other publishers. Thus holding a place of honour, he held also the post of greatest danger; for in case of proceedings against the author and publisher of an unlawful publication, it was the way of the law to hold the first and principal publisher as more responsible than the other associated booksellers, and even in some cases to regard the latter as being in no degree morally accountable for the contents of the work. In accordance with this trade-usage, Messrs. Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, of Paternoster Row, were associated in 1817, as second and subordinate publishers with Messrs. C. and J. Ollier, of Welbeck Street.

Shelley's suggestion was that, as the Olliers were frightened, they should slip out of the more dangerous position, by inducing Sherwood, Neely, and Jones to step into it by misrepresentation. The Olliers were instructed by Shelley to tell the other set of publishers an untruth, that was a rather complicated untruth. They were instructed to keep their alarm to themselves, and say to their comrades in the trade, 'We took the principal direction of the book *through a mistake*' (a sheer untruth), 'as it was Mr. Shelley's wish for you to be his principal publishers' (another sheer untruth), 'and therefore as Mr. Shelley has written us to that effect' (a third untruth on a point of fact) 'we think even at this late stage of the business you had better figure as principal publishers' (a false suggestion of motive). That the Olliers did as Shelley thus instructed them, may be inferred from the fact that, on the title-page (the 1818 title-page) of *Laon and Cythna*, Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, figure as principal publishers.

Laon and Cythna was published, in so far that a few copies (*three* copies, according to some writers on the subject, but probably a larger number) passed into circulation; one of them being the copy, that afforded the *Quarterly* Reviewer an opportunity for making his memorable onslaught on the book. But this had barely been accomplished, when the poem was an addition to the considerable list of the works, written by Shelley and speedily suppressed. What was the immediate cause of the renewal of their alarm does not appear; but the book was no sooner out, than the Messrs. Ollier decided that not another copy should be issued with their name on the title-page. Probably they acted on their lawyer's urgent representation, that, unless it were promptly suppressed, so scandalous a book would certainly result in their prosecution. It has been repeatedly averred that their alarm proceeded chiefly from the freedom with which the poem dealt with matters of religion and politics. But the changes which converted *Laon and Cythna* into *The Revolt of Islam*, show that this was not the case. Some of the changes, no doubt, modified the terms relating to the Almighty; but the prime purpose of the alterations was to relieve the poem of its incestuous sentiment. Unquestionably the publishers were alarmed by the book's blasphemy and political extravagance; but their most serious apprehension was fear of such an outcry against the poem's indecency, as would put them on trial for

issuing an obscene book. On reconsideration the publishers saw that in case of such a prosecution, it would avail them nothing that their name appeared after 'Sherwood, Neely, and Jones,' on the title-page of the book, of which they would be proved to have been the principal publishers. No wonder they were firm. No wonder also that Shelley was in the highest state of excitement for his own interests,—and of indignation at his publisher's cowardice. What the Olliers felt was, of course, felt by the other publishers.

Matters were in this position, when it occurred to some ingenious student of the suppressed poem, that it would be easy to relieve the work of its incestuous quality and some of its most objectionable passages touching religion, by cancelling a few leaves and replacing them with leaves, that would change the character and complexion of the whole performance. By dropping the final paragraph (with its note) from the Preface, producing a new title-page, and altering fifty-five lines of the body of the book, it would be easy to manipulate, at a trifling cost, the printed sheets out of their egregious offensiveness into comparative innocence. Who was the originator of this ingenious suggestion does not appear; but the editorial ingenuity of the proposal inclines one to attribute it to Leigh Hunt. Anyhow, the suggestion was carried out by a council, consisting of one of the Messrs. Ollier, the author, Peacock, and some other of the author's personal friends (Leigh Hunt and Hogg being, no doubt, of the number). Never perhaps was stranger work done by a literary committee at successive meetings. At the sittings of the council, Shelley (says Peacock) 'contested the proposed alterations step by step; in the end, sometimes adopting, more frequently modifying, never originating, and always insisting that his poem was spoiled.' No wonder he fought his friends point by point. The poem had been written to demonstrate the purity and loveliness of the extremest kind of Free Love. By changing Cythna from Laon's sister, to a mere orphan, living under the protection of his parents, the alterations deprived the poem of the prime doctrine it was intended to inculcate. The poem that should have proclaimed the beauty and holiness of incestuous Love was manipulated into a mere poetic apology for Lawless Love of an ordinary and less interesting kind. So castrated, the Poem of Incest could no longer generate the sentiment, whose activity was needful, in

Shelley's opinion, for the attainment of 'a happier condition of moral and political society.' As any reader may learn from a careful study of the poem, enough mischief was left in *The Revolt of Islam* to satisfy an ordinary enthusiast for lawless love ; but Shelley was an 'extra'-ordinary enthusiast for wedlock without restrictions. It is imputed to him for righteousness by his idolaters, that he persisted to the last in the pure and unqualified doctrine of the unaltered poem. In reference to Lady Shelley's quite inaccurate statement that the poet (in 1817-18) was 'convinced of the propriety of making' the 'alterations,' which converted *Laon and Cythna* into *The Revolt of Islam*, Mr. Buxton Forman remarks proudly of the teacher, who might have been the Saviour of the World, 'There is nothing in his subsequent history to countenance the idea that he regarded *Laon and Cythna* as in any way offensive.'

But before the superlatively offensive poem had been manipulated into a comparatively inoffensive one, some copies of *Laon and Cythna* had passed from the publisher's hands to the world. Whether these copies were no more, or several more, than three, does not matter. If they were only three, they were enough to darken the poet's fame and cloud his happiness for the rest of his days. Three hundred copies in circulation could not have been more disastrous to his social credit than those *three*, one of which was lent to the *Quarterly Reviewer*.

Is it wonderful that Shelley, during the few years still remaining to him of a brief existence, lived under the world's ban, and though producing works of incomparable art in quick succession, produced them only to stir the wrath of critics, and aggravate the pain he endured from the world's neglect of his genius? It was known, and could not be gainsaid, in every coterie of men of letters, how abruptly he had left his first childish wife ; how, on breaking with so young and lovely a creature, he told her to 'do as other women did' ; how within a few weeks of breaking with this girl, he had carried off his familiar friend's sixteen-years-old daughter ; and how in language of matchless beauty and vigour, he had used all the powers of his poetic genius, not only to deride marriage, but to teach his readers that the most repulsive and blighting of all the several kinds of incestuous love was wholesome, innocent, and beautiful. Is it surprising that in less than a year and four months from the publication of *Laon and Cythna*, he wrote

from Rome to Peacock, 'I am regarded by all who know or hear of me, except, I think, on the whole, five individuals, as a rare prodigy of crime and pollution, whose look even might infect?' Is it surprising that, critics, fully cognizant of the power and many excellences of his poetry, forbore to extol his genius, from a conscientious repugnance to his social philosophy, and a fear that by applauding the poet they should strengthen the hands of the social innovator? Is it surprising that, whilst temperate and judicious men of letters were silent about what they secretly admired, but could not venture to openly commend, less discerning critics in their abhorrence of the social innovator, wrote wild nonsense about the stupid trash, the drivel and buffoonery of his finest productions?

Of course, these less discerning critics had better have imitated the more temperate and discreet men of letters, and held their peace. But critics are human; and when men speak under the influence of strong resentment, they are apt to say wild things. To point to the angry things written to Shelley's discredit, when the passions he had stirred were at their fiercest rage, as evidence of a singular and unaccountable blindness to the excellences of fine poetry, is to misread the signs of a former time. Like Byron, the author of *Laon and Cythna* provoked a storm he was not permitted to survive; though he would have survived it, had he lived to middle age and continued to write in the vein of *Prometheus Unbound* and *Adonais*. It is not wonderful that violent things were said of the man, who had done violence to society's finest sensibilities. What occurred to his annoyance more than sixty years since would occur now-a-days to a similar offender,—say, to a novelist of high culture and singular aptitude for his department of literary art, guilty of producing a novel whose hero and heroine, born of the same parents, and reared in the same home, should live and love like Laon and Cythna; the whole romance being cunningly devised and skilfully worked out, for the purpose of luring readers to the opinion that brothers and sisters ought to be allowed to marry one another. After all that has been done during the last fifty years to make people tolerant of the Free Contract, what would happen if such a story came to us one fine day from the pen of a young and remarkably able writer (*ætat.* 25), together with his assurance that the work was 'an experiment on the temper of the public mind,' and an attempt to bring

about 'happier conditions of moral and political society?' Would critics be mealy-mouthed and weigh their words precisely in declaring the experiment an outrage, and the attempt a monstrous scandal? Would they be less outspoken on discovering that the young writer, at so early a stage of his existence, had put away his first wife, seduced his intimate friend's sixteen-years-old daughter, written strongly on previous occasions against chastity and conjugal constancy, and been declared by the Lord Chancellor a person whose *conduct* proved him unfit to have the charge of his children?

One is often asked to explain what is meant by 'the irony of fate.' It is easier to explain a term by an example than by words. It was fate's irony that, whilst the poet, who exhibited a brother's incestuous intercourse with his sister as sinless and beautiful, escaped the imputation he may be said to have invited by the personal note at the end of the Preface, the world was induced to charge the crime passionately on another poet, who had only written of such incest vaguely as an enormity of wickedness, or mockingly as the familiar arrangement of a remote period. Another example of fate's irony is found in the fact that, when Byron was suffering in posthumous fame from the Beecher-Stowe calumny, the more fervid of the Shelleyan enthusiasts and the more fervid of the Shelleyan socialists combined to decry him as a prodigy of wickedness for practising the form of Lawless Love, which Shelley had declared compatible with virtue. Fate also was set upon another exploit in irony, when she determined that the poem, which a committee of men of the world declared unfit for circulation during the profligate Regency, should be produced *verbatim* for the moral edification of the men, and women, and young people of Victorian England.

CHAPTER XIV.

FROM MARLOW TO ITALY.

The Hunts and the Shelleys—Their Intimacy—Pecuniary Difficulties—Dealings with Money-lenders—Leigh Hunt relieves Shelley of £1400—His Testimony to Shelley's virtuous Manners—Shelley's Benevolence at Marlow—At the Opera—Departure for Italy—The fated Children—Shelley's literary Work and studious Life in Italy—Milan—Allegra sent to her Father—Elise the Swiss Nurse—Her Knowledge and Suspicions—Claire and her 'Sister'—Their Affectionate Intercourse and Occasional Quarrels—Shelley's Affection for Claire—Vagrants in Italy—Pisa—Leghorn—Maria Gisborne—Her Husband and Son—Claire and Shelley at Venice—Trick played on Byron—His Civilities to the Shelleys—Little Clara's Death—Paolo the Knave—He falls in Love with Elise—Their Marriage—Paolo's Wrath and Vengeance—Emilia Viviani—Shelley's Adoration of Her—The three-cornered Flirtation—Mrs. Shelley's Attitude and Action—Shelley's Fault in the Affair—His subsequent Shame at the Business—The imaginary Assault at the Pisan Post Office.

It has been already noticed how the Shelleyan apologists deal with the evidence that, in December, 1816, when Harriett's suicide held the attention of the literary coteries, Shelley's conduct towards her had the approval of his friend Leigh Hunt and two other unbiased judges,—his bookseller and his attorney (the same attorney who treated the poet so scurvily in the spring of 1821). Whilst using Leigh Hunt as a witness to the excellence of Shelley's conduct to his wife, the Shelleyan apologists imply that, in the December of 1816, the two poets had long been intimate friends. It is, however, certain that, till the end of the autumn of 1816, the two 'friends' knew so little of one another that they were nothing more than slight acquaintances. How little Hunt cared about the author of *Alastor* at any time prior to Harriett's suicide, appears from his confession that, on receiving certain sets of verses from the still youthful literary aspirant, he neither printed them in the *Examiner* nor returned them to their author, but after 'unfortunately mislaying them,' forgot all about them,—i.e. tossed them disdainfully to the waste-paper basket. Something (weeks or months) later, on seeing reason to render the *amende honorable* to the young author whom he had treated so contemptuously, Hunt put in

the *Examiner* (December, 1816) an article that, referring to Shelley as one of 'three young writers, who appeared to promise a considerable addition of strength to the new school,' and also spoke of him as 'the author of a poetical work entitled *Alastor, or the Spirit of Solitude*; no line of which poem had been seen by the poetical editor, when he alluded to it thus cautiously in the apologetic note. 'We shall,' Hunt says of the poet, of whose writings he had seen nothing but the 'one or two specimens,' so lightly pitched into the wicker-basket, after a hasty glance at their contents, 'procure what he has published, and if the rest answer to what we have seen, we shall have no hesitation in announcing him for a very striking and original thinker.' That these words of Hunt's pen appeared in the *Examiner*, so late as 1st December, 1816, is conclusive evidence of how little he cared *for*, and knew *of*, Shelley up to the very moment of Harriett's death. Yet in these latest years of grace, we have been required to believe there can have been nothing very reprehensible in Shelley's conduct to his wife, since it had the approval of so precise a moralist as Leigh Hunt, who, by reason of his long-standing intimacy with Shelley, must have known all about it.*

* In his autobiography it is admitted by Hunt, that, before his liberation from prison, on 3rd February, 1815, his personal acquaintance with Shelley was very slight. 'It was,' he says, 'my imprisonment that brought me acquainted with my friend of friends, Shelley. I had seen little of him before; but he wrote to me, making me a princely offer, which at that time I stood in no need of.' In another place the autobiographer says, 'I first saw Shelley during the earlier period of the *Examiner*, before his indictment on account of the Regent, but it was only for a few short visits, which did not produce intimacy.' Hunt does not seem to have ever visited Shelley at Bishopgate, or, in any fair sense of the term, to have known Shelley whilst the latter lived there. In the summer of 1816, Shelley was in Switzerland. On his return from Switzerland, he went to Bath. There was no intercourse (to be called friendship) between him and Hunt, till the close of 1816. In April, 1818, Shelley went to Italy, where in the last week of his existence he again came face to face with Hunt. Like Trelawny, Hunt made the most of his personal intercourse with Shelley. Readers should bear in mind that the period of the personal intercourse of the two poets, *i.e.* the period during which they saw much of one another, speaking together face to face, began at the close of 1816, and ended in April, 1818,—a period less than eighteen months. Till he saw his way to suck money out of the youngster's pocket, Hunt never troubled himself about Shelley. In the short year and half of their *personal* association, the editor of the *Examiner* found Shelley a profitable acquaintance.

But if Hunt was tardy in responding to Shelley's repeated overtures for friendship, he atoned for previous negligence by his subsequent pains to plant himself in the affection of the young man, whom he had treated with scant courtesy. The editor of the *Examiner* was too sincere a man to admire aught till he had found it admirable. But on seeing Shelley's titles to his homage, he promptly acknowledged them, and on discovering his virtues, declared his generous admiration of them in no uncertain voice. The Hermit of Marlow and the poet of Hampstead's 'Vale of Health' became close friends. Whilst Marianne (Mrs. Hunt) discovered her dearest and ever-loving familiar in Mrs. Shelley, their husbands had all thoughts and things (money not excluded) in common. Admiring one another's writings, the poets backed each other's bills. Circumstances constraining him to fly from Lisson Grove, or the 'Vale of Health,' and seek a place of retirement from creditors, Hunt found the needful seclusion at Marlow, where he stayed, on one occasion, for nearly three months. On the other hand, towards the close of 1817, when tradesmen were troubling him sorely to pay certain bills for necessaries, supplied to the late Mrs. Shelley, the author of *Alastor* made quick march from Bisham Wood to Hampstead Heath, and found hospitality with concealment in the 'Vale of Health,' where he delighted his host's children by playing with them in an equally amiable and frolicsome manner.

It was during this sojourn with the Hunts that Shelley came, one winterly afternoon, on the poor woman, lying in a fit upon the heath, with a little boy by her side, and was so greatly incensed by the reluctance of the nearest householders to open their doors and arms to her. Why Shelley, who eventually carried the sufferer to Hunt's quarters (which were near at hand), did not carry her there in the first instance, does not appear. It is, however, on the record that, he deferred taking so obvious and reasonable a course till he had vainly tried to get her admitted to nearer houses, whose occupants declined to act charitably in the matter,—possibly, because they thought he might as well take his *protégée* to the place where he was himself staying. One of the individuals, to whose benevolence he vainly appealed in this emergency, being a gentleman who was stepping out of his carriage at the door of his own goodly mansion, the indignant poet is said to have told the selfish householder

roundly, that he might expect to have his house burnt over his head in the quickly-coming revolution, when the poor would settle accounts summarily with the rich. As it is told, the story redounds to Shelley's honour and the rich householder's shame. But as some of the story's truth may be on its unrecorded side, judicious readers will decline to condemn the householder. It is, however, to the poet's credit that, seeing a poor woman in need of help, he eventually helped her in the best way, by taking her to his own place of abode, and sending for the nearest doctor.

Fruitful of the pleasures, that usually result from the close and affectionate intercourse of congenial friends, the intimacy of the two poets was fruitful also to the elder poet of advantages which he may not have been base enough to compass deliberately, but was unquestionably base enough to accept. Towards the close of 1817, Shelley was raising money, in some cases, by post-obits, and, in other cases, by loans charged on his eventual estate. How much he raised by these processes in the later months of 1817 and the earlier months of 1818, does not appear; but probably the greater part of the heavy debt he put on his estate, between his coming of age and his death, was created by pecuniary transactions of this particular period. Of the terms at which he procured ready money, enough for the reader's purpose appears from a letter, in which he is seen raising money at the rate of 2000*l.* in future repayment, for every 1000*l.* put into his hands. At a rough computation from this transaction, he may be presumed to have received a clear sum of 11,000*l.* for the 22,000*l.*, with which he charged his estate before his death. In addition to the money raised by loans charged on the estate, he also borrowed largely on post-obits, that were, of course, never paid, as he pre-deceased his father. Whether they passed through his hands to tradesmen for value received, or to needy friends, the sums so raised were paid to, and spent by, him; and it is obvious from what has been said of the estates to which he was entitled in remainder, that, had Shelley survived his father (who died 1844), and continued to live as prodigally from 1822 to 1844, he would have found himself, on the cessation of his allowance of 1000*l.* a-year, a quite poor, if not an absolutely penniless, man at his father's death.

Raising money on these ruinous terms, towards the end of

1817, and in the opening weeks of the following year, Shelley raised it with the cognizance of Leigh Hunt. The money came to the younger poet's hands whilst he was living in closest intimacy with the gentleman who, whenever money was passing about, never failed to see why he should not have some of it, without working for it. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that, whilst arranging his own affairs, Shelley was induced to think he might as well arrange Hunt's affairs also. Nor is it surprising that Hunt took the same view of the case. The entire amount sucked from Shelley by Hunt at this period may have been exaggerated. Miss Mitford may have been repeating an inaccurate story, when she wrote how the brokers swept off the younger poet's chairs, tables, and bedding for the satisfaction of one of Hunt's numerous creditors. But it is certain that Shelley (*ætat.* 25) gave Hunt (*ætat.* 33) 1400*l.* in one gift, and that this was not the only sum of money to pass in some way or other from the younger poet to the man of letters who, besides being eight years Shelley's senior, was editor and joint-proprietor of a flourishing newspaper. Hunt himself confesses to have taken this 1400*l.* in one lump from his young friend. In judging this affair, readers should not lose sight of the difference of the two men in respect to age,—Shelley being only twenty-five years old, and much younger than his years in character and worldly experience, whilst Hunt was a man of middle-age, who had been trained in poverty to be keenly mindful of his own interest, though affecting to be wholly regardless of it. Familiar with all the particulars of Shelley's by no means prosperous circumstances, cognizant of the means by which Shelley had obtained the money, aware that the gift of 1400*l.* signified a withdrawal of twice as much from the not ample estate, which would be Shelley's only provision for himself and family after his father's death, this mature man of the world took this young man's money,—not in payment for work done, but as a gift. The affair is all the more discreditable to Hunt, because he was the editor of a powerful journal, whilst Shelley was a literary aspirant, who, in making his senior so enormous a gift, may be supposed to have been actuated, in some degree, by regard for the editor's power to serve him or injure him on the press. To think of Shelley pressing the notes for 1400*l.* on his friend, and of Hunt taking them with much effusion after a graceful show of reluctance, is to remember how Shelley, in his

Oxford days, wrote about 'pouching the villains,' who had it in their power to praise his novel.

Some two years after his sojourn of many weeks at Marlow, Hunt, to clear his friend's reputation from some of the charges poured upon him by the *Quarterly Reviewer*, produced in the *Examiner* (10th October, 1819) a vindictory article, that contains the following account of Shelley's manner of living at Marlow :—

The *Reviewer*, says Hunt in this article, 'asserts that he' [i.e. Shelley] 'is shamefully dissolute in his conduct! We heard of similar assertions when we resided in the same house with Mr. Shelley for nearly three months; and how was he living all that time? As much like Plato himself, as all his theories resemble Plato—or rather, still more like a Pythagorean. This was the round of his daily life,—he was up early; breakfasted sparingly; wrote this *Revolt of Islam* all the morning; went out in his boat, or into the woods with some Greek author or the Bible in his hands; came home to a dinner of vegetables (for he took neither meat nor wine); visited, if necessary, the sick and fatherless, whom others gave Bibles to and no help; wrote or studied again, or read to his wife and friends the whole evening; took a crust of bread, or a glass of whey, for his supper; and went early to bed. This is literally the whole of the life he led, or that we believe he now leads in Italy; nor have we ever known him, in spite of the malignant and ludicrous exaggerations on this point, deviate, notwithstanding his theories, even into a single action which those who differ with him might think blameable. We do not say that he would always square his conduct by their opinions as a matter of principle; we only say that he acted just as if he did so square it. We forbear, out of regard for the very bloom of their beauty, to touch upon numberless other charities and generousities which we have known him exercise; but this we must say, in general, that we never lived with a man who gave so complete an idea of an ardent and principled aspirant in Philosophy as Percy Shelley, and that we believe him, from the bottom of our hearts, to be one of the noblest hearts as well as heads which the world has seen for a long time. We never met, in short, with a being who came nearer, perhaps so near, to that height of humanity mentioned in the conclusion of an essay of Lord Bacon's, where he speaks of excess of charity, and of its not being in the power of "man or angel to come in danger by it."'

This evidence from a witness who had received 1400*l.* in a lump from the subject of his eulogy, might be dismissed with a smile, were it not that it has recently been produced as a valid and conclusive testimony to Shelley's moral worth, by a writer who knew everything about him. The defence having been so dealt with, it is well for readers to recall the character of the

eulogist, and the circumstances of his brief, though close, association with the man, of whose life he wrote so authoritatively. It should be remembered that the witness, affecting to have formed his opinion of Shelley's character from a long acquaintance, was the editor who, at the beginning of December, 1816, had not read a line of *Alastor*, and in his unconcern for the young poet, had recently 'chucked' his verses into the waste-paper basket. In writing that, to his knowledge, Shelley had never committed a single action to be reprehended by moralists differing from him on matters of opinion, Leigh Hunt showed either how little he knew of Shelley, or how little he cared for the truth or falsehood of what he wrote in his friend's behalf. If Hunt really believed that Shelley's conduct towards William Godwin covered no single blameworthy action, he had been strangely misinformed respecting a chief and recent episode of his friend's story. On the other hand, if he wrote the vindictory article with a sufficient knowledge of that passage of Shelley's career, he wrote it mendaciously. It is not surprising that, after gushing over Shelley's goodness to the poor at Marlow, the vindicator of slandered virtue forbore, 'out of regard for the very bloom of their beauty,' to touch upon 'the poet's numberless other charities and generousities.' The moral effect of the vindication would not have been heightened by either a precise declaration or a general acknowledgment of the extent to which the writer had himself profited by such exhibitions of virtue.

But though the testimony to character is necessarily affected by our knowledge of the witness's peculiar obligations to the giver of great gifts, it is only fair to Hunt to record that the truthfulness of his viewy account of Shelley's manner of living at Marlow is placed beyond question by the evidence of contemporary letters, and the more precise statements of witnesses in no degree open to suspicion. Without adhering rigidly to the diet, which writers imperfectly acquainted with the philosopher's doctrine and discipline are wont to style Pythagorean, Shelley refrained from meat and wine during the greater part of his Marlow time. Once and again during that period he lapsed suddenly or by degrees from the rules of the vegetarians, but only to return to them with a stronger opinion that his health required him to abstain from flesh and fermented drinks. It was not possible for a man so sympathetic and observant of

human life about him to live anywhere without compassionating the unfortunate of his own species ; and there is a superabundance of evidence that, living at Marlow during a season of insufficient employment and keen distress for struggling people, he did all and more than he could afford for the relief of the poor of his immediate neighbourhood. Giving money to several families, whom he placed on the list of his regular weekly pensioners, he visited the recipients of his bounty in their comfortless cottages, and in other ways showed himself mindful of the first duty of the rich to their extremely indigent neighbours. Ministering to the necessities of the poor in this deliberate manner, he at the same time relieved them fitfully, in obedience to sudden impulses of pity and benevolence. On the other hand, whilst acting towards the poor of Marlow precisely as he had acted towards the poor of Tremadoc, he was in some instances less than duly mindful of another, and no less sacred, obligation. It would be more pleasant to remember how the Hermit of Marlow entered a neighbour's garden without the shoes, which a minute earlier he had taken from his feet and given to a poor beggar-woman, were not the story of this rather fantastic act of benevolence associated with less agreeable stories of unpaid bills. The poet, who gave Leigh Hunt 1400*l.* in a single donation, should not have cleared away from Marlow without paying his doctor's charges for medical service.

Shelley's last evening in London (the evening of 10th March, 1818) he passed pleasantly at the Opera-house, on the occasion of the first performance in England of Rossini's *Barbiere di Siviglia*, the part of Count Almaviva being performed by Garcia, who on the same occasion made his first appearance in an English house. The first night of the new opera and the new singer—a singer of Garcia's celebrity, and an opera of the *Barber's* enduring popularity—still remains a memorable night of our operatic annals ; and it is pleasant to remember that Peacock (a fine connoisseur of music), Shelley (ever sensitive to music, without being a nice or scientific critic of its composers), Claire (a musical enthusiast), and Mrs. Shelley, were at the opera on so interesting an occasion, and after the performance supped together, after the wont of playgoers seventy years since.

Early the next morning, Shelley's carriage (possibly the same carriage in which poor Harriett paid visits something less

than four years since) rolled slowly from the capital, to which he never returned. Stacked high and freighted heavily with luggage, the carriage held a numerous family-party,—Shelley, Mrs. Shelley, Claire, and their Swiss maid, Elise, besides the three children, *vis.*, (1) Willie, two years and a few weeks of age, (2) Allegra, just a year and two months old, and (3) little six-months-old Clara. Two of the children, Willie and the wee Clara (named after her aunt Claire) had been christened on the previous Monday (9th March, 1816), when Allegra was probably also admitted to the Church militant here on earth. What a group of babes, journeying, each and all, to early death in the land of the foreigner! Baby Clara went out of England to die a few months later at Venice; Willie found his last bed at Rome in the following year; Allegra perished of fever at the Bagna Cavallo convent in the April of 1822, only a few months before the poet, who had nursed her in her earliest infancy, was swept from life by the wild hurricane. To think of the early deaths of these children, followed thus speedily by the poet, who took them out with him to Italy, is to imagine Fate and Death attending the heavily-laden coach as it moved slowly seaward along the Dover Road,—the same road along which Claire and Mary had sped with Harriett's husband, on quicker wheels, little more than three years and six months since.

Starting for Italy on 11th March, 1818, Shelley was within four years and four months of his death when he left the country of his birth for ever:—the four years and four months during which he wrote *Julian and Maddalo* (1818), *Lines written among the Euganean Hills* (1818), *Stanzas written in Dejection, near Naples* (1818), *Prometheus Unbound* (1818–19), *The Cenci* (1819), *Ode to Heaven* (1819), *An Exhortation* (1819), *Ode to the West Wind* (1819), *An Ode to the Assertors of Liberty* (1819), *The Mask of Anarchy* (1819), *Peter Bell the Third* (1819), *The Sensitive Plant* (1820), *A Vision of the Sea* (1820), *The Cloud* (1820), *To a Skylark* (1820), *Ode to Liberty* (1820), *Œdipus Tyrannus, or Swellfoot the Tyrant* (1820), *Letter to Maria Gisborne* (1820), *The Witch of Atlas* (1820), *Epipsychidion* (1820–21), *Autumn: A Dirge* (1820), *Adonais* (1821), *Hellas* (1821), the unfinished *Charles the First* (1821–22), and the commencement of *The Triumph of Life* (1822). To take a general view of Shelley's industry during this closing and brightest term of a genius that, after moving slowly to perfect

development, was still in the fulness of its power and promise when it passed abruptly from the world, readers must recall the strong stream of minor poems that flowed from his pen during these latest years of his existence. Remembrance must also be had of the Translations (from Homer, Euripides, Plato, Bion, Moschus, Virgil, Dante, Calderon), the Notes on the Roman and Florentine sculptures, the perfect part of the unfinished *Defence of Poetry*, the *Essay on Christianity*, and the other multifarious prose writings, including the Italian letters, whose publication would by themselves have made a reputation for an ordinary *littérateur*. Such exuberant productiveness in different departments of the higher literature is comparable only with the profuse and versatile fecundity of Byron's genius during the same period. To suggest any other comparison of the work accomplished by Byron and Shelley, during their concurrent years of voluntary exile, would be foreign to the purpose of the present writer, who, in dealing successively with the lives of the two poets, has studiously and jealously resisted every temptation to be the critic of either.

It lies, however, well within his province to remark that in the comparison of their lives in Italy, Shelley, from one point of view, has greatly the advantage of the poet with whom he will ever be associated. Perhaps no modern English poet of the highest class (pardon me, Mr. Swinburne) was ever more devoid than Byron of scholarly enthusiasm. Relying in his earlier time on Hobhouse for archæology and history, the author of *Childe Harold* never made a nearer approach to severe study than when he helped the Venetian monks of St. Lazarus to produce their English-Armenian grammar. Denied his poetical genius, he would have thought a daily newspaper and the *Gentleman's Magazine* sufficient literature for any reasonable English peer. With it, he was usually content with the intellectual food and excitement, afforded by good magazines and the best of the current *belles lettres*. Shelley, on the other hand, had a natural taste and turn for scholarly labour. Under no conceivable circumstances could he have justified Mr. Buxton Forman's high opinion, and become the Saviour of the World; but stript of his faculty of song, he might, under several different sets of conceivable conditions, have developed into a great and famous scholar. Never a severe student (in the severest and technical sense of the term) he was from his boy

hood a fitful, and sometimes a no less laborious than curious, reader of literature, seldom attractive to those who lack the studious disposition. Delighting in old Greek authors at Bishopgate, he became in Italy a strenuous, habitual, and sympathetic reader of authors, who are mere names to the semi-educated rabble. Rising with the bird he glorified, whilst Byron was turning from his first into his second sleep, he went to books for happiness. To show he caught the spirit of the authors he perused, one needs only to point to the series of his free-handed and sympathetic Translations. Reading indoors in foul weather, he read in the sunshine when the skies were cloudless. If he was not thinking or writing, he was poring over printed or written pages. On starting for walk or ride, his last thought on crossing the threshold was to make sure he had the book of the moment in his pocket; and, so wide was the range of his studious interests, the book might be Greek or Latin, German or Spanish, or an Arabic manuscript which he was tackling with Medwin's scarcely adequate assistance. Whilst Byron was a superb poet and mere man of the world, Shelley was a keen student as well as a superb poet. These are matters to be remembered by those who would know the Real Shelley, as he lived out the latest of his few years in Italy.

Taking his carriage, together with his women, babes, and baggage, across the Channel, Shelley travelled leisurely from Calais through France, by the way of Rheims, Langres, and Lyons (whence he wrote to Leigh Hunt on 22nd March, 1818), Les Echelles, and crossing the Alps, entered Milan on an early day in April, 1818, from which last-named city Allegra was sent to Byron (at Venice), who, whilst expressing his readiness and wish to have care of the child, declined to receive the child's mother. Baby Allegra was therefore sent to her father's palazzo on the Grand Canal under the charge of the female servant, described by Moore in his *Life of Byron* as 'a Swiss nurse, a young girl not above nineteen or twenty years of age, and in every respect unfit to have the charge of such an infant, without the superintendence of some more experienced person.' The nurse, described thus slightly by Moore, was Elise, who, on receiving instructions to convey the child to the palazzo, understood that she would return to her mistress at Milan, after seeing Allegra settled in her new home. As Mrs. Shelley had no wish to part with the girl, who, under maternal

surveillance, had proved a sufficient nurse for Willie and Clara, she had no intention to be without Elise's services for many days. In the absence, however, of a nurse, suitable or otherwise, for Allegra at Byron's palazzo, Mrs. Shelley consented that Elise should remain in charge of Claire's child at Venice, till another arrangement could be made for her care. Hence it came to pass that Mrs. Shelley was deprived of her proper nurse till the following August, when Elise returned to her mistress at Este.

It would be unreasonable to assume that the nurse who brought the child to the Palazzo Mocenigo had grounds for regarding Byron as the child's father. Servants are required all the world over to do what they are told, without asking why or wherefore. Moreover, it is usual with employers to be at some pains to prevent their servants from discovering the why and wherefore of orders they are told to execute, for the furtherance of affairs of secrecy. Some twenty months before Elise took Allegra to Venice, she (a young Swiss girl) had been hired at Geneva by Mrs. Shelley to act as her little boy's nurse. Living with the Shelleys at Geneva, whilst the city was bubbling with hideous scandal about them, it is not to be imagined that Elise went to England without having heard something of the Genevese gossip to her employers' discredit. Who was more likely to be waylaid and questioned by the scores of Genevese tattlers, bent on gathering evidence to the truth of stories, that had already passed from Switzerland to England? Coming to the girl's ears, the gossip could not fail to make her suspicious respecting her master's intimacy with the young lady, who was styled his sister. If she had heard nothing of the gossip, she, anyhow, soon became an observer of facts that must have awakened her curiosity and suspicion.

Accompanying the Shelleys and Claire to England, she served them as nursemaid at Bath and Marlow. At Bath the quick-witted girl observed signs that Claire would soon be a mother. Soon it devolved on her to look after Claire's Under infant as well as Mrs. Shelley's little boy. Elise must have known that Allegra was Claire's offspring; but the facts coming under the servant's observation afforded her no information respecting the child's paternity. On that point she was doubtless left to inference and conjecture. Though they could not help at (in his

her in some degree into their confidence—at least, could not prevent her from seeing what went on under her own eyes, and drawing her own inferences from what she saw—it is not likely that Mary and Claire told their Swiss maid who was Allegra's father. Several considerations must have disposed them to be silent to her on that point. Honour and prudence forbade them to confide so delicate a secret to the young nurse, who would be almost sure to let it out to her fellow-servants and the Marlow gossip-mongers, and write about it in her next letter to her friends at Geneva,—a secret which, if it were blabbed at Marlow, would soon be talked about in London, and travel to the ears of William Godwin and Mrs. Godwin, from whom both sisters were especially desirous to withhold the fact of Allegra's birth. Moreover, whilst keenly alive to the reasons for withholding the secret from Elise, the sisters must have felt they could gain nothing by confiding it to her. Knowing that Elise would naturally receive with suspicion any story they might tell her about Allegra's paternity, they knew that of all stories the truth was the story she was least likely to believe. The natural course for two ladies in so embarrassing a position to take towards their young female servant, would be to tell her a more or less romantic fib, that would not greatly aggravate their trouble if she blabbed it to her familiars.

Probably Elise was told that her mistress's sister was married under circumstances, that compelled her for the present to keep her marriage a profound secret. At the same time Elise was entreated, with tears and pathetic assurances of eternal gratitude for her fidelity, to guard the secret thus confided to her honour. Claire (a clever hand at fibbing, when fibs might serve her purpose) was just the girl to trick out such a story in the prettiest style, and Elise was just the quick-witted damsel to receive the confidence with a proper show of credulity, and laugh in her sleeve at it as mere fiction.

In the meantime Elise saw what she saw, and (though only a poor Swiss nursemaid) had a right to draw inferences from what she saw. It did not escape the smart girl's notice that, whilst living affectionately with Claire, Shelley seemed to care for her little girl, quite as much as he cared for Mrs. Shelley's little boy,—that he nursed little Allegra, and sung to her, for the half-hour at a time, just as though she were his own infant.

Is it not told in *Julian and Maddalo* by Shelley himself, how he delighted in his sister Claire's babe, and

‘nursed
Her fine and feeble limbs when she came first
To this bleak world;’

and in the ‘lovely toy’s’ infancy made himself ‘her antient play-fellow?’ Under these circumstances, Elise may well have come to the conclusion that Allegra’s ‘antient play-fellow’ was also her young father. Elise’s disposition to take this view of the case would not have been less strong, had she known how Shelley had provided for Claire and her child by his will. Though I am dealing conjecturally with mere inferences from admitted facts, I have little doubt that Elise took this view of Allegra’s paternity at Marlow, that she went with the child to Italy under the same impression, and that she held to the same opinion on delivering the little girl into Byron’s custody at Venice. To show by documentary evidence that, before starting from Milan with Allegra in her charge, Elise had been expressly informed of the child’s relation to Byron, would take nothing from the strength of my suspicion that, in conveying Allegra to her father, Elise imagined herself to be conveying Shelley’s child to the famous Lord Byron, in order that he should make arrangements for the child’s future education:—it having been determined (for reasons obvious to Elise’s imagination) that her master had better not figure as principal in arrangements, so likely to fix the little girl’s paternity on him. Readers who concur with the present writer in this suspicion (which, in the absence of evidence sufficient for transmuting suspicion to conviction, is offered as nothing more than a reasonable hypothesis), will concur with him also in regarding Elise’s misconception and the circumstances of Allegra’s transference from the Shelleys’ care to her father’s keeping, as the source of the subsequent story (believed by the Hoppners, who had it in some shape or other from Elise and her husband) that Claire had given birth to a child by Shelley, which he had sent to a Foundling Hospital.

Of one thing there must now be an end in Shelleyan biography,—the practice of writing about Claire, as though she were a sort of fallen woman, to whom the Shelleys in their magnanimity showed great kindness, though she had scarcely

any claim upon them for protection. As the family coach (so heavily laden with babies, and baggage, and womankind) rolled through France, Claire (so recently acknowledged as their sister by Shelley and Mary in their *Six Weeks' Tour*)—Claire, to whom Shelley had assigned in his will no less than 12,000*l.* of his scarcely ample estate—never thought of herself as aught else than Mrs. Shelley's sister. On the other hand, though these children of the same home were only sisters-by-affinity, Mary Shelley had no disposition to think herself anything else than Shelley's wife and Claire's sister. If blood is thicker than water, habit is stronger than either; and the two girls (still only quite young girls) had been habituated from childhood to think of one another as sisters. Taught from the same books and by the same governess, playing with the same toys, placed for punishment in opposite corners of the same room, whipt with the same rod, kissed every night by the same 'papa,' these children of different parents, but the same home, had been trained to think of one another as sisters, and nothing else than sisters. Of course they had their tiffs and quarrels. Without blood, they were far more sisters to one another, than those sisters of the whole blood, Eliza and Harriett Westbrook. Nor may Claire be regarded as a sister who, like the too vehemently maligned Eliza, fixed herself on a younger sister and her husband, and would not allow them to throw her off. Claire and Mary (as Mr. Kegan Paul shows by the evidences which he contradicts in his text) were girls of about the same age, though Claire was probably some months older. Shelley never came to dislike Claire. There were moments when he admired her, delighted in her, loved her; but never an hour in which he regarded her with aversion, though the vivacious girl was given to rally, flout, mock, cross him till he fairly lost his temper. In the last month of his life (18th June, 1822), Shelley (*vide* Forman's edition of *Shelley's Prose Works*) wrote from Lerici of this wayward, piquant, charming creature, 'She is vivacious and talkative; and though she teases me sometimes, I like her.' How greatly he cared for her is shown by the munificence with which he provided for her and her child by his will.

Going with them to Italy as their sister, Claire (one or two flying trips excepted) was incessantly with Shelley and her sister for the first twenty months of their life in Italy. During the last two years and a half of the term,—when she had taken

to giving music and language lessons in Florence, and was in that capital the animating spirit of the little circle of admirers whom she drew about her by her riant beauty and brilliant style, her wit and accomplishments, her gaiety and irresistible sprightliness,—she looked to ‘the Shelleys’ (whether they were living in a villa or on a flat) as her home. No doubt she received great kindness from the Shelleys; but no less certain is it that she repaid them in kind. If she was unhappy, raging against Byron, dismally wretched (as the too vehemently happy often are in the intervals between periods of elation), she made a rush for ‘home.’ On the other hand, when the Shelleys were languishing and in trouble, their first thought was to signal for Claire, to fly over to them and brighten them. When Mary was sickening for the illness, that resulted, at the Casa Magni, in her miscarriage shortly before the fatal boat accident, Claire was by her side. It was ill for Mary Godwin’s fame, when Mr. Froude the other day published a few scraps of ineffectual writing, in evidence that she cordially disliked the sister, with whom she was merely having a tiff. Far worse will it be for Mary Shelley’s reputation for sincerity and feminine loyalty, should it ever appear from scraps of her writing that, whilst living with every show of affection for her sister, she was thinking unamiably of her, and putting notes to her discredit in a secret record.

Of course, on leaving England for the last time, Mrs. Shelley had no wish to have Claire perpetually with her, nor any expectation that she and her husband would have Allegra’s mother on their hands, in a certain sense, for more than four years. On the failure of the negotiations with Byron, it was, of course, Mrs. Shelley’s hope that her lovely sister, after reconciling herself to Byron’s aversion for her, would win the love of some more steadfast admirer, and pass from girlish lightness to matronly honour. In case Claire should not marry, it was doubtless hoped alike by Shelley and his wife that, after seeing the world for awhile under their protection, and completing her education, she would strike out a career for herself. That the two young (*quite* young) women had their disagreements of opinion and conflicts of temper in Italy, even as they had bickered and clashed (whilst loving one another abundantly) in former time, was a matter of course with two girls, so self-dependent and fervid, so sensitive and quick-tempered. But

one needs only to look at published letters for a superabundance of evidence that Claire's intercourse with the Shelleys from the spring of 1818 to the Midsummer of 1822, though ruffled now and again by gusts of impetuosity and passages of superficial discord, was the intercourse of near relations, held together by the usual forces of mutual liking and genuine attachment.

Writing from Bagni di Lucca on 17th August, 1818, to Mrs. Gisborne, immediately after Shelley and Claire had started for Venice to see Byron, Mrs. Shelley (*vide Shelley Memorials*) says, 'Shelley and C[laire] are gone; they went to-day to Venice on important business' (how cautiously the writer refers to the business!); 'and I am left to take care of the house. Now, if all of you, or any of you, would come and cheer my solitude, it would be exceedingly kind.' At the Bagni di Lucca, Shelley and his wife had taken horse-exercise almost every evening, having Claire for their companion in their rides, till she hurt her knee in falling from her horse:—an accident that for a time incapacitated her for exercise in the saddle.

Mrs. Shelley and Claire went together to the *conversazione*, where they were so vastly amused by the whimsical braggart,—an Englishman who, speaking Italian fluently with his national accent and intonation, told the sisters how at Lisbon he, fighting on foot with the brace of pistols, that never missed fire or aim, put to flight thirty well-armed and well-mounted robbers. Whilst Mrs. Shelley was listening with outward civility and secret amusement to this man of valour and brave speech, Claire's dark eyes overflowed with fun and piquant gaiety, as she whispered a saucy speech in her sister's ear.

In November and December, 1819, Shelley and the sisters were staying at Florence in the *pension*, whence Mrs. Shelley wrote one of her most amusing letters to Mrs. Gisborne.

In the letter she wrote for Mrs. Hoppner's eyes (the letter, some of whose passages were copied and dressed not long since by Mr. Froude for the readers of the *Nineteenth Century*) for the exculpation of Shelley and Claire, from the revolting charge that came to his ears at Ravenna in the August of 1821, Mrs. Shelley blazed into sisterly wrath at the suggestion that Claire was capable of the wickedness with which she was charged:—

'I will add,' writes the indignant sister to Mrs. Hoppner, from Pisa, on 10th August, 1821, 'that Claire has been separated from us for

about a year. She lives with a respectable German family at Florence. The reasons for this were obvious. Her connexion with us made her manifest as the *Miss Clermont*' (sic in Froude's transcript; but Mr. Froude is proverbially inaccurate in handling manuscripts) 'the mother of Allegra. Besides, we live much alone. She enters much into society there; and, solely occupied with the idea of the welfare of her child, she wished to appear such that she may not be thought in after times to be unworthy of fulfilling the maternal duties. You ought to have paused before you tried to convince the father of her child of such unheard-of atrocities on her part. If his generosity and knowledge of the world had not made him reject the slander with the ridicule it deserved, what irretrievable mischief you would have occasioned her!'

It is of the woman, who writes in this strain of Claire's devotion to her child, and strenuous efforts to qualify herself to be a good mother to her offspring, that Mr. Kegan Paul makes the staggering, though possibly correct, announcement that she thought her sister unfit to have the charge of Allegra.

It has been already told how Claire was by her sick sister's side, when the latter was dropping into the ill-health, which preceded her miscarriage at San Terenzo. In the well-known letter to Mrs. Gisborne from Pisa (dated 15th August, 1822,—five weeks and three days after Shelley's death), Mrs. Shelley makes repeated mention of her sister and nurse. Claire was the sedulous and loving nurse, who administered the brandy and eau-de-Cologne, and applied the vinegar, that kept her sister from fatal fainting, during the seven long hours of her most imminent danger. It was from anxiety for the patient, no less than from ignorance of the way in which it should be used, that Claire (in the doctor's absence) lacked the courage to use the ice, which at the close of those hours Shelley himself applied so freely and effectually. The helpful, bright, sweet-voiced, tender-handed Claire remained at the Casa Magni, when Shelley had gone off to Leghorn and Pisa, leaving his wife in her weakness, to brood with unutterable melancholy over her previsions of approaching calamity. The saddest hours Mary spent in that season of deepening gloom, were the hours when Claire was not by her side, to divert her thoughts, and cheer her spirits. As soon as Claire and Jane Williams had started for their evening walk, Shelley's wife was revisited by the feeling that disaster would speedily befall her only remaining child. Possessed by wretchedness, whilst gazing on one of the fairest scenes of all Italy, Mary used to pace slowly up and down the seaward

terrace, sinking momentarily from deep to deeper dejection, during the needful absence of the sister and friend, whose society just enabled her to endure the growing burden of grief and care, that without their sympathy would have been unendurable. Such was the service of love Claire is known, by the evidence of letters, to have rendered her sister.

Figuring thus pleasantly in Mrs. Shelley's letters, Claire shows forth no less agreeably in the series of Shelley's letters, that appear in Mr. Buxton Forman's edition of the poet's prose writings. At the Bagni di Lucca, in July and August, 1818, Claire and Mary are regular attendants of the Sunday *conversazioni*, though they refrain from dancing for reasons known doubtless to themselves, whilst Shelley is uncertain whether they decline to dance from philosophy or Protestantism. Leaving Mary and her babes at the Bagni in August, Shelley and Claire go off to Venice, performing part of the journey in the almost springless one-horse cabriolet, that causing Shelley much discomfort fatigues Claire exceedingly. Falling in with a German, who has just recovered from an attack of malarial fever caught in the Pontine Marshes, Shelley is disposed to travel in his company to Padua, when Claire, by her entreaties, prevails on him to avoid the stranger from whom he may catch the fever, dreaded by tourists in Italy. At Venice, where she is received cordially by the Hoppners, and avoided by Allegra's father, Claire is seen flitting hither and thither, on foot or by gondola, under Shelley's brotherly escort. By-and-by, when Mary has come with her babes to Este, the sisters are with Shelley at the villa Byron has lent them;—the house where Mary's little Clara sickens of the illness, so soon to end in death at Venice. When the Shelleys move southward, Claire has her seat in the heavily laden coach, travelling with them to Rome, and in their company taking her first cursory view of the manifold attractions of the Holy City. Shelley having preceded them by a few days, the sisters journey together to Naples with little Willie and his nurse, and with Paolo for the charioteer of their private carriage. At Resina, when Shelley and Mary mount mules for the ascent, Claire seats herself in the chair in which she is carried up Vesuvius 'on the shoulders of four men, much like a member of Parliament after he has gained his election, and looking' (says Shelley in his letter of 22nd December, 1818, to Peacock) 'with less reason,

quite as frightened.' At Rome with the Shelleys, when their boy's death plunges them in wretchedness, Claire is their companion and comforter in the ensuing months of despair. In the autumn of 1819 she is with them at Florence, where it amuses Shelley to observe how Lady Mountcashel's daughter, fickle as the breeze, is alternately in love and out of humour with Claire, who is in the highest and brightest of her changeful spirits at the delightful prospect of setting off in a day or two for Vienna.

Whether this trip was made for business as well as for pleasure does not appear; but whilst fruitful of delightful anticipations, the run to the Austrian capital may have had a graver purpose. For, set on being a self-dependent and self-sustaining young woman, Claire is seldom without a new scheme for the achievement of her purpose. She means to establish herself as a teacher of languages and music. She will sing herself into universal fame as an operatic *prima donna*. She will condescend for a while to be the resident governess of a family of the highest quality. Writing and talking of her as *la fille aux mille projets*, Shelley is ready at all times to aid her with sympathy, counsel, and money, in furtherance of each and all of her various schemes for finding suitable employment. Participating in her hopes, he shares her disappointments. Words cannot express his disdain for the mental narrowness, and moral debasement, and perverse wickedness of the gentlewoman who, after arranging to take Claire for her governess, avoided the compact, on being told of Miss Clairmont's recent entanglement with Lord Byron, and of the relation in which she stood to Byron's illegitimate daughter.

Shelley's attachment to Claire is the more remarkable, because the same fervour and capriciousness, that so often set her at discord with Mary, rendered her at times alike unruly and unreasonable to him. Alternating between the highest of high spirits and the most dismal moods of despondency, Claire suffered also from a temper, whose freakish vehemence might well have made Shelley despair of keeping on good terms with her. But though she often hurt and incensed him, she never extinguished his fondness for her. Probably Shelley liked her all the better for being as quick to twit and flout him into a pet, as clever in rallying and coaxing him back into good temper. Possibly the wayward Claire saw she confirmed him in his attachment to

her, by whipping him every now and then into transient mutiny against her influence. In moments of resentment Shelley could write angrily and disparagingly of Claire. But all the same it stands out clear upon the record that in eight long years he never revolted steadily against the charming girl and brilliant woman, of whom Byron wearied in much less than the same number of months. 'Claire is with us,' Shelley wrote to John Gisborne, from the Casa Magni, on 18th June, 1822, 'and the death of her child seems to have restored her to tranquillity. Her character is somewhat altered. She is vivacious and talkative; and though she teases me sometimes, I like her.'

It was thus that Shelley and Mary wrote of their 'sister' Claire,—the sister in whose society Mrs. Shelley seemed to delight, and Shelley certainly delighted; the sister for whose future he had provided by the two legacies of 6000*l.* each. At the same time the letters, written to the poet and his wife, overflow with evidence that their correspondents regarded Claire as a young gentlewoman, to be rated as a member of Shelley's domestic circle, and treated with the respect due to his wife's sister. Yet Lady Shelley would push Claire from the position thus assigned to her by Shelley and his wife, and recognized by all their friends. There must be an end to writing about Claire, as though she were aught else than Mrs. Shelley's sister. There must be an end of referring to her as a sort of fallen woman, to whom Shelley and his wife were magnanimously beneficent.

In one notable respect Shelley's life with his second wife in Italy resembled his life with his first wife in England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. It was a restless and vagrant existence. Students and men of letters are usually restful and home-loving creatures. But, though something less of a rover towards the end of his Italian time, than he was during his first marriage, Shelley never stayed long in the same place. In 1818 he passed about a month at Milan, three or four days at Pisa, a month or so at Leghorn, between eleven and twelve weeks at Bagni di Lucca, something more than ten weeks at Venice and Este, three weeks at Rome. Passing from Rome to Naples in the later part of December, 1818, he returned to Rome after spending eight or ten weeks in the more southern capital. From Rome he went again (in the summer of 1819) to the neighbourhood of Leghorn, where he rested for something over three

months, before migrating to Florence for the winter of 1819–20. In the February of 1820 he was at Pisa, where he remained (now in the city and now at the neighbouring baths) for a longer time than at any of the other places he visited; but even at Pisa, the place in which his roots (to use his own expression) struck deeper than anywhere else in Italy, he was a mere settler for the season. Of the twenty-six months (from the earlier time of February, 1820, to April, 1822), he spent nineteen months at or near Pisa, including the time passed in the trip to Ravenna and other excursions; but he never planted himself there so as to touch the soil beneath the surface. Moving in April, 1822, to Lerici, where he lived less on land than water, he perished three months later.

At Venice, through his intimacy with such Italian ladies as the Countess Albrizzi and the Countess Benzoni (countesses with crowded salons, albeit Shelley may have been justified in saying they smelt of garlic), and his unedifying familiarity with such women as Marianna Segati and Margarita Cogni,—and in later Italian time through his close association with Teresa Guiccioli, the Gambas, and the Romagnese revolutionists,—Byron knew the Italians and studied them closely, though doubtless under conditions that disposed him in the end to think too lowly of them. But to the last Shelley's knowledge of modern Italy and the modern Italians was no deeper or more accurate than the knowledge to be picked up by an observant holiday-maker in a six weeks' tour.

After staying a month at Milan—a month broken by a brief trip to Como, whose beauty surpassed everything the poet had ever beheld, with the exception of the arbutus islands of Killarney,—the Shelleys in May, 1818, travelled with a diminished party (Allegra having been taken off their hands, and Elise being detained for awhile at Venice to attend upon her) to Pisa, whence, in a three or four days, they proceeded to Leghorn, where they stayed for something like a month, and made the acquaintance of three individuals, who have their several and very different places in the Shelleyan story,—(1) Mr. Gisborne, the gentleman of liberal views, scholarly attainments, failing affairs, familiarity with opium, and inexpressibly hideous nose, whom Shelley found an oppressive bore, and therefore had the best right to regard with disfavour; (2) the democratic and godless Mrs. Gisborne, who, though he found

her 'the antipodes of enthusiasm,' became Shelley's sympathetic tutor in Spanish, and was clever enough to draw from him the poetical epistle *To Maria Gisborne*, and also to draw from his purse a good deal of money for her boy's advantage; and (3) Henry Reveley (Mrs. Gisborne's son by her former husband), a youthful and penniless engineer, for whose benefit the poet was adroitly manipulated into thinking, that the thing above all other things likely to promote the happiness of the human species and bring about the comity of nations, for which all good republicans were praying, was a steamboat that,—built by the young engineer and no other man,—should ply between Leghorn and Marseilles, for the advantage of mankind, and the especial enrichment of the Gisbornes.

Mrs. Shelley and the 'very amiable, accomplished, and completely unprejudiced' Mrs. Maria Gisborne formed an enthusiastic friendship; Mary of course regarding with interest the woman of mature age, who had been Mary Wollstonecraft's friend in the previous century, and might have been Mary Wollstonecraft's successor in William Godwin's affections, whilst Maria was quick to see that with management she might use Mrs. Shelley's influence over her husband for the advantage of the young man, who, had his mother yielded to William Godwin's scarcely flattering suit, would have been Mrs. Shelley's brother-by-affinity. There was much talk between the new friends of widely different ages about Mary Wollstonecraft;—talk in which Mrs. Maria Gisborne gave a delightful account of the personal charm and graces, the intellectual address and multifarious virtues, of Gilbert Imlay's victim. Whilst Mary was delighted, Maria (with proper maternal concern) bethought herself how Mary's enthusiasm for her mother's ancient friend might be turned to profit. The friendship was fruitful of much correspondence,—bright, sparkling, superlatively entertaining epistles by Mary, an admirable letter-writer; and no less characteristic, though far less commendable letters by Maria; the attitude Maria assumed to her partner in the friendship being clearly defined in the concluding words of a letter she wrote her dearest Mrs. Shelley in October, 1819,—the words conveying young Henry Reveley's affectionate remembrances to 'his good friends, *patron and patroness*.'

At the Bagni di Lucca—whither the Shelleys moved after tarrying at Leghorn for about a month—Paolo, the clever Italian

servant, who could do anything from cooking a dinner to grooming a horse, appears on the Shelleyan record. The one thing this treasure of a servant could not or would not do was to keep his accounts accurately; the financial inaccuracies being always too distinctly to his own advantage, not to rouse suspicions of his honesty, even from the beginning of his connection with the poet. At the Bagni, where Mary and Claire took horse-exercise, and seldom failed to attend the Sunday *conversazione*, though they declined to dance, *Rosalind and Helen* was finished at Mrs. Shelley's request some time before the poet, on 17th August, 1818, started with Claire for Venice, leaving his wife (as her letter of that date to Mrs. Gisborne shows) to take care of the house and her two children;—a letter from which it also appears that, on bidding her husband and sister adieu, Mary (who pressed Mrs. Gisborne to 'come and cheer her solitude') expected them both to be away for a 'considerable time. The next six days, however, were fruitful of change in the plans and prospects of all three. Holding steadily to his resolve not to be drawn into renewal of his former intimacy with Claire, Byron received Shelley with exuberant cordiality, and showed so much consideration for the feelings of his discarded mistress, as to grant her the companionship of her child for a week at Padua, where he imagined Mrs. Shelley to be then staying with her children. How came he to conceive that, instead of being with her babes at the Bagni di Lucca, Mrs. Shelley was at Padua?

There is no need for more precise evidence that the business, to which Mrs. Shelley referred in her letter to Mrs. Gisborne, was Claire's rather than Shelley's business:—that in taking Claire from the Bagni di Lucca to Venice, Shelley was actuated by the hope of affecting by personal intercourse with Byron, what he had failed to accomplish by letters. Byron having made it more than clear that, whilst ready to receive Allegra, he had no wish to see the child's mother, it may seem strange that Shelley could still hope to put matters in train, for Claire's restoration to her poet's affectionate regard. But circumstances countenanced the quickly disappointed hope. Byron having taken Allegra to his arms, with a reassuring show of paternal interest in her, information had come to Shelley and the sisters, that the child grew daily in her father's favour. There had been correspondence between Mrs. Hoppner and the sisters-by-affinity. Happy in the possession of her own lovely little boy (already in

his eighth month), the Consul-General's wife commiserated the young mother who was separated from her lovely little girl. Interested in Byron, who was already consulting her about arrangements for Allegra's welfare, and probably over-rating her influence over him, Mrs. Hoppner may well have imagined that in compassing his reconciliation with Allegra's mother, she would use her influence no less beneficially for him, than for Claire and her child. At the same time it was natural for Shelley to conceive that Byron's growing affection for his daughter would occasion a revival of his tenderness for the child's mother,—tenderness that, if they were brought together in a happy moment, might result in the reunion of their hearts. It was under these circumstances and with this hope that Shelley and Claire started for Venice.

Making the journey from Padua in a gondola, the voyagers entered their Venetian hotel at midnight of Saturday, 23rd August, 1818. On the morrow (Sunday) they went from their breakfast-table to Mrs. Hoppner's abode, where Shelley left Claire, on going off at three p.m. to call on Byron. It is told in *Julian and Maddalo* how Shelley played with Allegra in the billiard-room of the Palazzo Mocenigo, whilst waiting for Byron. In a well-known letter from Shelley to his wife it is told how cordially he was received by the poet of *Childe Harold*, who, covering his visitor with flattering civilities, seemed ready to oblige him in every respect but one. As Byron had no desire to see Claire, but on the contrary wished her to keep out of his path, it was incumbent on the diplomatic Shelley to account for her appearance at Venice in a way that should not reveal too abruptly one purpose of her long journey. A statement that she had come all the way from the Bagni di Lucca, only to get a peep at her child, was no announcement for Byron to receive without suspicion. It might move him to quick anger. A statement that she had come so far for the mere delight of seeing him would cause him to blaze into wrath. For the moment it was necessary to attribute Claire's arrival on the Grand Canal to maternal impulse; but it would be imprudent to ascribe the labour and expense of so long a journey to so slight a motive. But on being given to understand that Mrs. Shelley and her family were at Padua, Byron would think it only natural for Claire to run by water from the University town to Venice. Hence the white fib which caused Byron to think Mrs. Shelley at Padua,—the misconcep-

tion, on which the wily negotiator between Claire and her former admirer hastened to base an entreaty, that she might be allowed to take her child to Padua for a few days:—the misconception that caused Byron to place I Cappucini (the Este villa he had recently taken off Hoppner's hands) at his friends' service, and urge Shelley to lose no time in carrying his wife and her babes to the rural retreat, some twenty miles distant from hot and stuffy Padua.

It is not surprising that Byron was thus quick to put I Cappucini at Shelley's service. It was needful for him to show the Shelleys some hospitable civility, on their coming to his part of Italy. At the same time he could not think of entertaining them at his home on the Grand Canal. The Palazzo Mocenigo was no place for the entertainment of gentlewomen; and even had it been an establishment to which he could have invited gentlewomen with propriety, Byron would not have asked the Shelleys and Claire to stay with him there. To Shelley he would gladly have given bed and board in the Palazzo; but nothing could have induced the poet, ever hankering for reconciliation with his wife, to welcome (under the observation of all Venice) as guests to his house the two ladies, whose presence there would not fail to revive the revolting Genevese scandal. Wishing to pay the Shelleys a full measure of hospitable courtesy, he also wished to keep the ladies at a safe distance from Venice. At I Cappucini (a villa not generally known to be in his tenure) they would be out of his way and concealed from the Venetian scandal-mongers, whilst receiving from him a considerable civility. Hence the offer at which Shelley caught so quickly, that before going to bed for a second time at Venice he wrote off to Mary, ordering her to pack her traps, and come at once to Venice under Paolo's escort.

Were there no other evidence to the point, the mere fact that for some ten weeks they were Byron's guests at I Cappucini would of itself show, how little cause the Shelleys saw to resent his treatment of Claire. Indeed, why should they,—how could they, conceive themselves injured in the matter by Byron, who in every stage of the affair had acted precisely in accordance with the rules of the social arrangement, which Shelley commended as a graceful and wholesome substitute for lawful marriage? On coming to regard Lady Byron resentfully and Claire with affection, Byron had only exercised the sacred privi-

lege of a Free-Contract spouse in giving his heart to Claire, to have and hold it until he should be moved to give it to some one else. On ceasing to regard Claire tenderly, he had, in so far as she was concerned, done nothing forbidden by the favourers of the Free Contract. On the contrary, in every step of the business he shaped his course by Free Contract morals. To Claire he had said, 'Our felicity having perished, in obedience to the forces that cause human beings to love and cease from loving one another, you go your way, whilst I go mine. Leaving me to select another object of affection, do you give your heart to some one who wishes for it. We have been happy together; the time has come for us to seek happiness apart from one another.' At the same time, still speaking like an honourable Lawless Lover, Byron said, 'But I cannot allow you to suffer in your purse for your goodness to me. I will take charge of your child, rear it affectionately, provide for it liberally.' What was there in this for the Shelleys to resent, however sorry they might be for poor Claire, the brevity of whose dominion over Byron's volatile affections of course disappointed and saddened them? When Mr. Froude wrote, as though Shelley necessarily regarded Byron as Claire's seducer, he only revealed his absolute ignorance of facts, comprising much of what is most singular and interesting as well as most painful in Shelley's story.

It no more occurred to Shelley to take that view of Byron's conduct to Claire, than it occurred to him to think of himself as Mary's seducer. To the hour of his death Shelley never faltered in saying that Byron behaved well to Claire's child. That the Shelleys saw nothing to condemn seriously in his treatment of Claire herself, however much they regretted his inability to love her for a longer period, is shown by the friendly relations they maintained with him, the idolatrous extravagance of Shelley's admiration for him, and the regard in which even Mrs. Shelley held him for some time. Till her admiration of Byron was lowered, and her confidence in him shaken, by his vacillation about the *Liberal* and his treatment of the Hunts, Mrs. Shelley was not wanting in enthusiasm for the poet with 'a divine nature,' though no doubt her enthusiasm had not the fervour of her husband's admiration for the divine poet. Even so late as December, 1821 (*vide* Lady Shelley's *Shelley Memorials*) she wrote from Pisa to Mrs. Gisborne, 'Lord Byron is now living very sociably,

giving dinners to his male acquaintance and writing divinely. Perhaps by this time you have seen *Cain*, and will agree with us in thinking it his finest production.' The woman who resented Byron's treatment of her friends, the Hunts, never seems to have discovered any cause for cordial anger in his treatment of her sister Claire, and, indeed, it is not easy to discover what Shelley and Mary, with their views about marriage, could reasonably condemn in his treatment of Allegra's mother. By others it has been made a ground of severe censure, that Byron omitted to provide for Claire's failing years. But in extenuation of Byron's misconduct in this particular, if not to his perfect justification, it may be urged that, whilst believing her to have a friend on whom she had a stronger claim than on himself, he knew how her future had been provided for by the will, in which he figured as one of Shelley's two executors and trustees.

At Este, where he wrote *Julian and Maddalo* and the *Lines written among the Euganean Hills*, Shelley sorrowed for the death of his little Clara, the second daughter born to him by his second wife. From Padua, whilst the infant was languishing into death, Shelley wrote, on 22nd September, 1818, to his wife, then nursing the sick babe at Este, that though uneasy about their little one he was confident there was no danger. Two days later (24th September, 1818) Mary and Claire went to Padua, taking Clara with them to meet Shelley, who on realizing the infant's peril hastened with her to Venice for medical advice,—a journey taken all too late, for the patient had barely been brought within the city when she died in her mother's arms. The first to die of the three children, whom the Shelleys had taken out of England, Clara was buried in the Lido, beneath whose sands Byron would have rested had he breathed his last at Venice.

Leaving Este on 7th November, 1818, with his wife, Claire, Elise (who had returned to her mistress's side, at the beginning of her residence at Este), and little William, Shelley journeyed north Italy in his own carriage, drawn by his own acting as coachman,—a mode of travelling that is tedious and wearisome than economical. Resting on the 8th, and at Bologna on the 9th inst., they arrived in Rome on the 19th of November, from which place they departed on or about the 8th of December ('about a fort-

night ago I left Rome,' he wrote to Peacock on 22nd December, 1818, giving the approximate date of the departure*) for Naples, leaving Mary and the others of his party to follow him three days later, so as to give him time to choose lodgings for them before their arrival in the southern capital; the lodgings (opposite the Royal Gardens, with a full view of the bay) for which he paid three louis a-week.

That, on the occasion of the excursion to Vesuvius, Claire preferred to sit in a palanquin, whilst Shelley and Mary rode on mules, may have been due to timidity, referable to her accident at the Bagni di Lucca. It is, however, more probable that ill-health determined her to ascend the mountain in the least fatiguing manner. Anyhow, it is both certain and noteworthy that, on coming to Naples, Claire suffered so severely from bodily indisposition, that some two years and a half later, on having painful reasons for recalling all the domestic circumstances of their stay near the Royal Gardens, Mrs. Shelley, in her vindictory epistle to Mrs. Hoppner (August, 1821), thought it right to speak of her sister's Neapolitan illness. The illness, thus remembered by Mrs. Shelley, after an interval of two years and a half, as a matter likely to be misrepresented by her husband's and Claire's defamers, was no trifling ailment.

Before the last week of January, 1819, whilst Claire's sickness was causing them much anxiety, the Shelleys were in trouble with the servants, whose chattering tongues caused them so much annoyance in later time. Cheating them at the Bagni di Lucca, Paolo—the clever knave, ever quick to serve his employers and himself at the same time—continued to cheat the Shelleys till the opening of the next year. Serving them by turns as cook, valet, groom, coachman, courier, and accountant, the fellow had opportunities for cheating them in each capacity, and doubtless made the most of the opportunities. Dealing with no one but Shelley, he might have played his game with impunity; but the scoundrel's accounts were audited by Mrs. Shelley, who, whilst consenting to his mere petty pilferings, made a stand against his measures for positive

* Mr. Rossetti makes Shelley arrive at Naples on 1st December, 1818, and I am far from saying that the careful writer is wrong on the immaterial point. It is enough to know for certain that the poet made only a short stay (at the most, a sojourn of less than three weeks) at Rome on the occasion of his journey from Northern to Southern Italy.

plunder. The result was that Shelley discharged the man with warm words, which were perhaps something stronger and more caustic, through the poet's deficient knowledge of Italian, than he meant them to be. The gentleman, who gives vent to his indignation in a language he has not mastered perfectly, is apt to say outrageous things. Anyhow, refusing to submit to an egregious attempt at extortion, Shelley discharged the rascal, who, in the usual way of fellows of his sort, covered his discomfiture with abuse and threats of vengeance. The man having been sent about his business, the Shelleys hoped to hear no more of him. But the hope was disappointed. Shelley and his wife had barely congratulated themselves on being quit of the rascal, when Elise married him.

Elise does not appear to have been an evil creature. But gossiping no less freely, servants gossip even more habitually, about their masters and mistresses, than their employers gossip about them. On their way from Este to Naples, Paolo and Elise, as they fell in love with one another, were communicative about their master and mistress. If Elise had more than Paolo to say on the interesting subject, Paolo, with his greater knowledge of the world, could tell her how her highly interesting facts ought to be regarded and dealt with inferentially. After telling Paolo where she was born, and giving him a general view of her childhood, Elise told him how she had been hired by Mrs. Shelley at Geneva, and travelling with her master and mistress to England, had lived with them at Bath and Marlow in that country. No doubt, also, she told him how Allegra had been born in England, taken to Milan, and by her (the deponent) carried to the great Lord Byron at Venice, in whose palace she (Elise, the deponent) had stayed for successive weeks. There was much talk between the Italian knave and the Swiss nurse about Miss Claire, and Mr. Hoppner (the Consul-General at Venice) and Madame Hoppner, the lady born of Swiss parents in Elise's native land. Can it be questioned that, on arriving at Naples, the subtle Paolo and the quick-witted Elise conceived themselves to be in possession of an important family secret, their knowledge of which placed Monsignor Shelley and the Signora Shelley, and the Signora's 'cara sorella' Claire, at their mercy? Paolo was jubilant. The next time the signor and signora were disagreeable on a matter of accounts, they should know, that *he* knew what *they* knew.

Feeling tenderly to Mrs. Shelley and Miss Claire, for both had been very good to her, Elise hoped that Paolo would not be indiscreet. But Elise was a Swiss, and what can poor servants do, but make the most of their poor chances? A few weeks later Paolo, after dismissal from the service of a master and mistress whom he had plundered for six months, went his way, vowing to have his vengeance, unless the Signor Shelley paid him those other sequins. Two years and a half later Elise was writing to Madame Shelley for money, having received several gifts of money from the same lady, since leaving her service.

At Naples it is certain that Shelley was far from happy. The fancy seems to have possessed him that he was encountered there by the same lady, whom he imagined to have pressed her love upon him (under circumstances set forth on a previous page of this work) in 1816, just before he started for Geneva with Mary and Claire. The whole affair was imaginary. No woman's heart was offered to him in 1816. No lady was in that year guilty of unwomanly extravagance, through admiration of his poetry. As she was a mere creature of his fancy, the lady, who paid him so remarkable and embarrassing a compliment, cannot really have met him in Naples, and told him that she had in two different years tracked him through Europe, in obedience to her hopeless affection for him. It does not follow, however, that he recognized the unreality of his impressions, and was deliberately untruthful (in 1821-2) in speaking of his intercourse with the lady, who cannot have died in the winter of 1818-19, as she had never breathed the breath of life. It is impossible to say how far Shelley was the fool of his own fancy in this matter, *if* he was aught less than the master of it. As he was certainly in several matters untruthful, in the most precise and literal sense of the word, it is not unfair to suspect him of pure imposture in this curious business. Upon the whole, however, it appears more probable that he in course of time became a fitful believer in the story, of whose imaginary character he was cognizant at the season of its inception; that in the latter stages of the hallucination he was the dupe of a trick he had practised on his own mind. It accords with this theory, that the victim of semi-delusion was sometimes very miserable at Naples, expressing his wretchedness in pathetic verses which he hid from Mary, whilst acting

in divers ways, so as to make his wife imagine him to be set on concealing from her some cause of mental anguish.

Leaving Naples on 26th February, 1819, Shelley (making the return journey, even as he had travelled southwards, with his own horses) retraced his steps to Rome, where he remained for something over three months, during which time he underwent no slight annoyance from indications of the disfavour with which he was regarded by the English tourists. 'Such is the spirit of the English abroad as well as at home,' he wrote bitterly to Peacock, after remarking that, with the exception of five individuals at the utmost, he was regarded 'as a rare prodigy of crime and pollution, whose look even might infect.' Whilst insisting that he magnified and multiplied the signs of disapproval, that touched him so keenly, his widow could not venture to assert he had no real ground for the despondency, which she referred to his sense of being shunned, in the land of the stranger, by people of his own nation. There is something droll and touching in the pains taken by the poor lady to inform posterity that, if her Shelley suffered much from the insolence of some of the more vulgar of the travelling English, he was called upon by the Earl of Guildford and Sir William Drummond, during his stay at Rome; the pains thus taken to relieve the poet of dishonour being all the more pathetic, because the asperity of the lady's reflections on vulgar English tourists reveals how sensible William Godwin's daughter was, that she was in no small degree accountable for the slights offered to her husband. Poor Mrs. Shelley had better have been silent. The English who visited Rome two generations since were seldom remarkable for vulgarity; the least exalted and refined of them being at least fit companions for the young lady who, at the dawn of a certain July morning, slipped through her father's shop to the arms of her lover. They may have been victims of prejudice, but it was not a sign of vulgarity that English gentlemen, travelling with ladies in Italy, thought it best to keep out of Shelley's way, and that the ladies did not care to make his wife's acquaintance. In attributing the seclusion of their Roman life to the narrowness of her husband's means and the delicacy of his health, Mrs. Shelley only drew attention to the real causes of the exclusion from society he would have enjoyed, and she was pining to enter.

Towards the close of April, 1819, it was the intention of the

Shelleys to withdraw from the capital where they were ill at ease, and to return to Naples after the first week of the ensuing month ; but changing their plans they lingered at Rome till they were visited with trouble, far more oppressive and blighting, than the pain of being slighted and left to themselves. They were still at Rome when their little William (the second to die of the three fated children) passed from them, after a short illness, in the middle of his fourth year, breathing his last breath on the 6th or 7th of June ; on the earlier day according to one of Mrs. Shelley's letters, but on the later according to the stone, placed to his memory in the Protestant cemetery of the Italian capital. Henceforth Rome was associated in the minds of either parent with a supreme sorrow. Whilst Shelley was deeply moved by the child's death, Mary yielded to melancholy, that was only mitigated by the birth of her second son (the present Sir Percy Florence Shelley) in the ensuing November.

Withdrawing from Rome as soon as they had laid their boy in the grave, Shelley and his wife (with Claire for their comforter) carried their sorrow to Leghorn, where they rested at the Villa Valsovano, midway between the city and Monte Nero, till they moved at the end of September to Florence, Shelley having already made a flying trip from the Villa Valsovano to the last-named city, to select pleasant apartments for six months.

At the close of the next January, leaving Claire behind them at Florence, Shelley moved with his wife and their babe to Pisa, where he resided chiefly (either in the city or at the neighbouring baths of St. Julian) till the fatal migration to San Terenzo. Of all his several Italian resting-places, Pisa is the spot to which the mind turns most often, and, on the whole, most agreeably, in the survey of the poet's later years. It was at Pisa that he nursed his cousin Medwin in sickness, would fain have cherished the dying Keats, wrote *Adonais*, worshipped Emilia Viviani, lived closely with Byron (first on friendly and then on uneasy terms), made the acquaintance of the Williamses, joined hands with Trelawny, and again befriended the Hunts. But of all the Shelleyan associations with Pisa, none is more interesting to the student of the poet's nature, or perhaps more memorable to lovers of his song, than his sentimental idolatry of the Contessina, with whom Mrs. Shelley bravely maintained a romantic correspondence, as though she

were a cordial sharer of her husband's affectionate regard for the imprisoned beauty.

There is no need to reproduce what Medwin tells so agreeably, and perhaps with less than his usual inaccuracy, of the Contessina, whose dreamily voluptuous eyes, Grecian contour, darksome tresses, pale complexion, musical voice, and winning air of gentle sadness, stirred Shelley to discover in her conventual home a scene of barbarous captivity;—to inveigh against the cruelty of the father, who could immure so radiant a creature in so gloomy a building; to conceive himself defrauded of his proper felicity by the circumstances which rendered their union impossible; and in his tumultuous yearnings for the unattainable to cry aloud unto her:—

‘ Seraph of Heaven! too gentle to be human,
Veiling beneath that radiant form of Woman
All that is insupportable in thee
Of light, and love, and immortality!
Sweet Benediction in the eternal Curse!
Veiled Glory of this lampless Universe!
Thou Moon beyond the clouds! Thou living Form
Among the Dead! Thou Star above the Storm!
Thou Wonder, and thou Beauty, and thou Terror!
Thou Harmony of Nature's art! Thou Mirror
In whom, as in the splendour of the Sun,
All shapes look glorious which thou gazest on!

* * * * *

I never thought before my death to see
Youth's vision thus made perfect. Emily,
I love thee; though the world by no thin name
Will hide that love, from its unvalued shame.

* * * * *

Spouse! Sister! Angel! Pilot of the Fate
Whose course has been so starless! O too late
Belovèd! O too soon adored, by me!
For in the fields of immortality
My spirit should at first have worshipped thine,
A divine presence in a place divine;
Or should have moved beside it on this earth,
A shadow of that substance, from its birth;
But not as now: I love thee; yes, I feel
That on the fountain of my heart a seal
Is set, to keep its waters pure and bright
For thee, since in those *tears* thou hast delight.

* * * * *

Thy wisdom speaks in me, and bids me dare
 Beacon the rocks on which high hearts are wreckt.
 I never was attached to that great sect,
 Whose doctrine is, that each one should select
 Out of the crowd a mistress or a friend,
 And all the rest, though fair and wise, commend
 To cold oblivion, though it is in the code
 Of modern morals, and the beaten road
 Which those poor slaves with weary footsteps tread,
 Who travel to their home among the dead
 By the broad highway of the world, and so
 With one chained friend, perhaps a jealous foe,
 The dreariest and the longest journey go.

* * * * *

Emily,

A ship is floating in the harbour now,
 A wind is hovering o'er the mountain's brow ;
 There is a path on the sea's azure floor,
 No keel has ever ploughed that path before ;
 The halcyons brood around the foamless isles ;
 The treacherous ocean has forsworn its wiles ;
 The merry mariners are bold and free :
 Say, my heart's sister, wilt thou sail with me ?'

Whilst Shelley's passion for Emilia was running its brief course, between some time (probably a late one) of autumn, 1820, and an early day of spring, 1821, they exchanged letters ; Emilia in her letters usually addressing her worshiper as 'Caro Fratello,' but once in a while honouring him with the loftier and warmer title of 'Adorato Sposo,'—a term the young lady doubtless used in a spiritual sense, and with unqualified confidence that he would construe it in no other sense. At the same time Emilia and Mrs. Shelley, exchanging visits and other courtesies, appropriate to gentlewomen affectionately disposed to one another, maintained a sisterly correspondence with the pen, each styling the other 'Cara Sorella.' Mr. Rossetti is of opinion that no one, not even 'a scandal-monger beyond belief,' has ever ventured to insinuate that the mutual affection of Shelley and Emilia 'was other than platonic.' And in the sense, in which the word is used by those who think it applicable to every cordial attachment of two persons of opposite sex, that is attended by no incident likely to increase the population, there can be no question the affair was platonic. How could it have been otherwise ? The daughter of an Italian nobleman,

Emilia, living under the discipline and surveillance of a religious house, never saw Shelley under circumstances affording either of them an opportunity for throwing aside the restraints of etiquette and decorum. It does not, however, follow that the sentiment of *Epipsychidion*, overflowing in some of its tenderest passages with vehement admiration of Emilia's personal charms, falls within the most liberal definition of the elastic term.

That Shelley's pulses were quickened for a single instant during either his interviews with Emilia, or the meditations resulting in the poem, by emotions which (to use his own phrase) would have 'approximated him to the circle of a servant girl and her sweetheart,' I have not the faintest suspicion. And this book has failed in one respect if its readers find much difficulty in believing that robust sensuous fervour was in no degree accountable for the composition of the finest love poem in the literature of the universe. Had he been conscious of emotion, hovering however lightly over the confines of desire, it is inconceivable that Shelley would have made his wife an accomplice in his addresses to Emilia's feelings. It was due to the prime defect of his lower nature, that he was capable of inducing Mary to play a part in the three-cornered flirtation.

In writing to Peacock after the game had been played out, that he had 'made acquaintance in an obscure convent with the only Italian for whom he ever felt any interest,' Shelley declared the full measure, and the real quality and complexion, of his genuine concern in Emilia. He had been interested in a charming girl. Gratified in his artistic sensibility by her personal loveliness, precisely as a connoisseur is gratified by the beauty of an exquisite piece of sculpture, and stirred to sympathetic curiosity by what was to him novel and singular in her altogether commonplace position and story, he, for the first time during his residence in Italy, felt a strong interest in one of its people,—an interest that, disposing him to think well of her, moved him to credit her with all the excellencies of woman-kind. All that followed was the result of the excitement of a powerfully imaginative brain, acting with equal vigour and subtlety, whilst it perfected its conceptions with the self-concentrated energy of a power, wholly disconnected from the animal that possessed it. Endowing Emilia with all the con-

ceivable virtues of womankind, he worshipt a being that was less a reality than the offspring of his fancy.

Whether he showed as much of chivalric feeling as he did of egotistic waywardness in distempering with egregious flattery the mind of the young woman, who was designed by her father to pass from her convent into wedlock with a man of her own social degree, is a question that may be left for the reader's unaided consideration. Left also for the present may be the question whether the chivalrous Shelley showed proper chivalric care of his wife's feelings in constraining her to witness and to further his platonic suit, when a moment's consideration would have told him that, even if the suit did not vex her to vulgar jealousy, to hear him pour the idolatries of *Epipsychidion* on the object of his imaginary passion, would necessarily cause her the keenest anguish which a sensitive and sentimental wife can experience,—the pain of discovering herself far beneath her husband's ideal standard of feminine excellence; the pain of discovering him capable of rendering greater homage to another woman than to herself; the pain of feeling herself much less than necessary to his happiness.

In judging an enthusiast one must ever make allowance for his particular enthusiasm. Were it otherwise, one would attribute singular indelicacy, as well as defective knowledge of feminine nature, to those of the Shelleyan zealots who argue that Mary had no reason to resent or disapprove the attachment, which she could not think 'other than platonic,' as though it were not in the nature of every sensitive and sentimental woman (and Mary possessed both qualities in an eminent degree) to prize her husband's admiration of her mental endowments, his regard for her moral graces, his sympathy with, and loyalty to, her spiritual nature, far more highly than his matter-of-course consideration for those of her domestic privileges and personal rights, in respect to which the law would afford her some measure of inadequate protection and miserable remedy, should he venture to violate them. From what these zealots say, it would seem that, whilst he was chiefly admirable and delightful for his mental powers and spiritual graces, Mrs. Shelley had

By others of the Shelleyan apologists it is argued that Mrs. Shelley's conduct, in becoming as it were an accomplice in her husband's idolatry of Emilia, is evidence that her feelings were in no way wounded by his attention to the beautiful girl. But to argue in this way is to attribute to Mrs. Shelley an insensibility, wholly foreign to a nature by no means wanting in womanly feeling, discernment, spirit, and fervour. Because she showed what is usually called 'good sense' in concealing her annoyance, whilst consenting prudently to what a less clever woman would have resisted indignantly, it is not to be imagined that she really loved the *cara sorella* to whom she paid visits and wrote gushing letters, or would, at any moment of their acquaintance, have been sorry to hear that Emilia, with the darksome tresses and voluptuous eyes, had gone off to Jericho. What Shelley's wife felt for the Contessina is not to be learnt from the letters that passed between the two young women, nor from the epistles Mrs. Shelley wrote about her *cara sorella* to Leigh Hunt and divers other people, *whilst* her husband was passing through the agitations of his spiritual love for Emilia the Matchless. It was not for the young wife, humouring her husband for the sake of preserving her power over him, to tell his friends he was making a goose of himself, or to write bitter things against Emilia which would only bring upon her the imputation she was most anxious to avoid—the imputation of being jealous of her spiritual rival. But when Emilia the angelic had passed from the Pisan convent into marriage with the Italian gentleman whom she soon worried into hating her, and Shelley having survived his passion for her, had passed to the dominion of another spiritual mistress, Mrs. Shelley told Mrs. Gisborne, with equal candour and piquancy, what she really thought of Emilia, of Shelley's love of the young lady, and of her rather different love of him.

Reflecting disdainfully on her 'dirty enough' Pisan acquaintances, Mrs. Shelley gave Mrs. Gisborne to understand that, not content with the cakes, wine, and sugar-candy of spiritual love, Emilia, to her worshiper's horror, asked him to give her a considerable sum of money,—a demand that may acquit him of want of gallantry in writing (*vide* Forman's edition of Shelley's *Prose Works*) to John Gisborne from Lerici on 18th June, 1822, just three weeks before the fatal boat-accident:—

‘The *Epipsychidion* I cannot look at; the person whom it celebrates was a cloud instead of a Juno, and poor Ixion starts from the centaur that was the offspring of his own embrace.’

Whilst penning these lines, Shelley was still moving along the comparatively tranquil stream of his melancholy attachment to Jane Williams, the last of his spiritual brides, to whose singing and guitar he listened on the evening after writing the letter, as he paced to and fro on the Casa Magni terrace, whilst Mary lay a-bed faint and exhausted by her recent miscarriage.

Before he passes to the concluding term of Shelley’s residence at Pisa, the reader should be informed of another of those imaginary incidents, which would have had prominence in the record, had Shelley lived to be his own biographer. In the summer of 1820, whilst Mr. Tighe (son of the still famous Mrs. Tighe) was staying at Pisa, Shelley came in high excitement to that gentleman (or at least told Medwin he had gone to Mr. Tighe) with this strange story. He (Shelley, the narrator of the affair to Medwin, if not to Tighe) had gone to the Post Office of Pisa for letters, and had barely uttered his name to the clerk of the Poste-restante bureau, when a stranger, with a military cloak hanging from his shoulders, exclaimed, ‘What, are you that d——d atheist, Shelley?’ and forthwith felled him to the ground with a stunning fist-blow,—a blow rendering the poet unconscious, whilst the doer of the violent deed went off, cloak and all. According to the story, given to Medwin some three months or so after the alleged occurrence, Shelley and Tighe tracked the ruffianly assailant to the Tre Donzelle of Pisa, and on learning he had started for Genoa, hastened thither in the hope of overtaking and punishing him. Mr. Rossetti suggests that, in respect to this alleged assault, Medwin, the original historian of the affair, may have given a loose account of some adventure that is said to have taken place at Rome. But I see no reason to accept this suggestion. Though comically inaccurate in his reminiscences, Medwin was an honest gentleman and a precise note-taker. On coming to Pisa to stay with Shelley in the late autumn of 1820, he was a diarist who took pains to record exactly the things seen by him, and the things (true or false) told to him by other people. Without giving Shelley as his authority for the narrative, he tells the story of the assault as one of the matters which came to his knowledge soon after his arrival at Pisa, during his familiar

gentleman's literary defects, I do not question that he had the story of the assault from Shelley's lips, and passed it on through one of his note-books with substantial accuracy. It is certain no such attack was made on Shelley at Pisa. The marvellous story must be regarded as an affair of delusion, semi-delusion, or sheer untruth.

CHAPTER XV.

PISAN ACQUAINTANCES.

The Williamses—Shelley at Ravenna—The Shelley-Claire Scandal—Shelley's startling Letter to Mrs. Shelley—Examination of the Letter—Its wild Inaccuracies—Mrs. Shelley's vindictory Letter to Mrs. Hoppner—Demonstration that Byron was authorized by Shelley to withhold the Letter—Explanation of the Shelley-Claire Scandal—Shelley's Visit to Allegra at Bagna-Cavallo—Project for starting the *Liberal*—Leigh Hunt invited to edit the *Liberal*—Shelley's Change of Plans—His Pretexts and Reasons for changing them—Leigh Hunt's Way of dealing with his Friends—His Concealment of his financial Position—Byron at Pisa—Hunt's Misadventures on his Outward Voyage—Byron's Discouragement in respect to the *Liberal*—Differences between Byron and Shelley—Shelley's Position between Byron and Hunt—The Byron-Shelley 'Set' at Pisa—Shelley and Hunt in secret League against Byron—Shelley's Change of Feeling towards Byron—Was Byron aware of the Change?

THOUGH leading a life of seclusion and studious industry, Shelley escaped at Pisa from the social estrangement, almost amounting to social isolation, which had alternately irritated and depressed him during the earlier stages of his residence in Italy, and would have affected him still more painfully, had it not been for Claire's exhilarating vivaciousness. If he made no friends in the Tuscan city, Pisa at least afforded him acquaintances,—
 ! Vacca the physician (who wisely treating the poet as a *malade*
 ; *imaginaire* told him to confide in nature for the proper treatment
 ! of his maladies); Sgricci the improvisatore, whose peculiar
 faculty stirred the poet's curiosity and admiration; and the

Mary than her husband; and Jane Williams, the last of the several women, fair or otherwise, to move Shelley to platonic affection. From time to time, also, at Pisa, Shelley saw something of Lady Mountcashel, whose acquaintance he had made at Florence,—the gentlewoman of letters, who, whilst corresponding regularly with her old friend, Claire's mother, had her reasons for living abroad under the name and style of Mrs. Mason, together with her cold and capricious daughter, who ranged herself for a while with Claire's admirers. But of all Shelley's Pisan associates, in the time preceding Byron's tenure of the Palazzo Lanfranchi, none is more deserving of commemoration than the Prince Mavrocordatos, with whom Shelley played chess and lived for awhile on terms of domestic intimacy, before dedicating *Hellas* to him, as 'an imperfect token' of the author's 'admiration, sympathy, and friendship.' That Shelley had some other and less creditable associates at the Tuscan city and the adjacent Baths, may be inferred from the contemptuous and even disgusting severity with which Mrs. Shelley spoke of their Pisan acquaintances as a 'dirty enough' lot of people.

In July, 1821, the Shelleys designed to spend the next winter in Florence with Mr. and Mrs. Horace Smith, whom they had promised to introduce to the glories of the Uffizi and Pitti galleries; and in accordance with this purpose Shelley went to Florence at the end of July to choose a suitable residence. But this scheme for the winter fell through; Mrs. Smith's ill health determining Horace Smith to postpone their Italian trip,—an opportune change of purpose, that liberated the Shelleys from their engagement to winter at Florence, just as they were wishing for a decent pretext for throwing the Smiths over, and wintering again at Pisa, where they would be members of the great Byron's especial circle.

Five days after writing from Florence to his wife at Bagni di Pisa, Shelley was writing (6th August, 1821) to her from Bologna, as he was on the point of starting for Ravenna, to visit Byron at the Palazzo Guiccioli, which he entered at 10 p.m. of the same date. Crossing at this late hour his entertainer's threshold, Shelley was not permitted to retire to rest, by daylight, until he had heard a piece of scandal that cannot have disposed him for slumber. The promptitude, with which Byron poured this piece of tattle into his guest's ear, will remind readers how at Diodati he seized the earliest moment to chatter to another

friend about the revolting Genevese scandal. Before Shelley went to bed for the first time, at five o'clock a.m. at the Palazzo Guiccioli, he had heard that rumour charged him with being the father by Claire of a child, whom she had put into a Foundling Hospital. It was of course the easier for Byron to speak to Shelley of so indelicate a matter, because they had spoken freely together just five years since on the details of the Genevese scandal. Going to bed at five or six a.m. it was Byron's practice to rise in the afternoon; and the poet, who thus turned night into day, was still only in his second sleep, when Shelley, at 11 a.m. on the 7th August, 1821, was writing to his wife in these terms,—

'Lord Byron has told me of a circumstance that shocked me exceedingly, because it exhibits a degree of desperate and wicked malice, for which I am at a loss to account. When I hear such things my patience and philosophy are put to a severe proof, whilst I refrain from seeking out some obscure hiding-place where the countenance of man may never meet me more. . . . It seems that Elise, actuated either by some inconceivable malice for our dismissing her, or bribed by my enemies, or making common cause with her husband, has persuaded the Hoppners of a story, so monstrous and incredible, that they must have been prone to believe any evil to have believed such assertions upon such evidence. Mr. Hoppner wrote to Lord Byron, to state this story as a reason why he declined any further communication with us, and why he advised him to do the same. Elise says that Claire was my mistress; that she was brought to bed; that I immediately tore the child from her and sent it to the Foundling Hospital. I quote Mr. Hoppner's words—and this is stated to have taken place in the winter after we left Este (1819–20).—[sic, in the proverbially inaccurate Mr. Froude's transcript. The winter of the stay at Naples was the winter of 1818–19.] In addition she says that both I and Claire treated you in the most shameful manner; that I neglected and beat you, and that Claire never let a day pass without offering you insults of the most violent

forward it to the Hoppners. Lord Byron is not up, I do not know the Hoppners' address, and I am anxious not to lose a post.'

For the italics of the foregoing extract the present transcriber is responsible.

It is in the memory of some readers of this book, that the afore-given passage, from Shelley's letter of 7th August, was a chief feature of the article, which Mr. Froude wrote for the August-1883 *Nineteenth Century*, to the discredit of my *Real Lord Byron*, and for Byron's defamation. It is therefore in some degree for the defence of my own reputation (a matter of importance to at least one person), though chiefly for the vindication of Byron's honour from the latest of his defamers' countless calumnies, and for the fuller exhibition of certain aspects of Shelley's character, that I proceed to examine the passage of Shelley's 7th August-1821 letter to his wife, certain parts of her reply to it, and the use made by Mr. Froude of the poet's letter and Mrs. Shelley's vindictory answer.

The shameful conduct, charged against Shelley and Claire, was (according to Shelley's letter) alleged to have taken place in the winter of 1818-19, *i.e.* when they were at Naples. The indictment (according to the same letter) comprised several counts:—(1) That Shelley had taken Claire for his mistress under his wife's roof; (2) That he and Claire had joined in treating his wife cruelly in other ways; (3) That he had beaten his wife and neglected her; (4) That he tore from Claire the child to which she had given birth; (5) That he had sent the child into a Foundling Hospital; (6) That he had destroyed *or* abandoned the child,—*i.e.* that, if he had not put the child into a Foundling Hospital, he had destroyed it. According to the letter Elise had made these charges, and the Hoppners believed them,—*i.e.* deemed him guilty of the first five charges, and further guilty of abandoning *or* murdering his own offspring. I say, *according to Shelley's letter*; for this excited epistle by a man, who in the opinion of his most intimate friends was absolutely incapable of writing a precisely accurate account of any agitating passage of his own quite recent affairs, is our only account of the substance and particulars of Byron's speech at or after midnight to the greatly excited and indignant Shelley. Is it likely that this account is precisely or substantially accurate?

From Byron's March-1821 note to Hoppner we *know what* ill things they charged against Shelley and Claire. We *know*

they believed that Claire was Shelley's mistress, that Claire had given birth to a child, and that *she* (not Shelley) had put this child into a Foundling. Byron's words to Hoppner are precise. 'The moral part of this letter,' he wrote to Hoppner in March, 1821, about Claire's epistle, 'upon the Italians, &c., comes with an excellent grace from the writer now living with a *man* and his *wife*, and having planted a child in the Foundling.'—They did not imagine that Shelley had torn the child from Claire's breast, and sent it to a Foundling against her will. On the contrary they believed the child to have been put into the Foundling by Claire. At the worst they believed Shelley guilty, on this point, of mere acquiescence in *her* arrangement for getting rid of the child. They thought that the child was sent to a Foundling. It never occurred to them to suspect Shelley of having destroyed the child. One difficulty of the matter is that Byron, to say the least of it, was not quite, but almost, as untruthful as Shelley. But it was not in the way of his peculiar untruthfulness, to say in cold blood that Hoppner believed Shelley to have torn the child from Claire's breast, and sent it to a Foundling against her will, *or* perhaps destroyed it, when he knew Hoppner thought nothing of the kind. In his hatred of Claire, Byron hugged the notion that *she* had planted her child in a Foundling; and his hatred of her would alone have prevented him from telling a lie, that would have represented her as innocent of that offence, at least in Hoppner's opinion. Yet Shelley (so prone to write with wild inaccuracy about his personal affairs) wrote to his wife that Byron had told him certain things (over and above the real communications) which it is inconceivable Byron told him.

Another remarkable feature of Shelley's letter is the way in which he refers to the first count of the indictment. Writing to *his own wife*, Shelley (the poet, who according to his idolaters might have been the Saviour of the World) positively tells *her*, that, if he had lived in adultery with her sister-by-affinity under her own roof, he would have been guilty of nothing worse than 'a great error!' He would not have committed prodigious immorality, and a revolting outrage of social decency. He would not have been guilty of loathsome domestic uncleanness. He would only have fallen into 'a great error.' He wrote this of *himself* to his *own wife*! This fact should be pondered by those, who not long since were so indignant with Byron for imagining

Shelley could have sinned with Claire in his wife's house. Here is Shelley, instructing his own wife that the enormity would have been nothing more heinous than a big blunder.

Moved by Shelley to write a vehement denial of the slanders, Mrs. Shelley (best of letter-writers) seized her pen, and produced an epistle that cannot be commended too highly as an exhibition of womanly feeling. On some subordinate points it is not free from confusion and inconsistency, and in one or two passages the writer *seems* guilty of several material inaccuracies; but this appearance may be wholly due to the carelessness of transcribers of the printed copies of Shelley's letter to her. For instance, whilst Shelley in the printed passages of his letter merely says, 'Elise . . . has persuaded the Hoppners,' and 'Elise says,' Mrs. Shelley in her vindictory epistle says of her husband's letter, 'It tells me that Elise *wrote to you*' (*i.e.* to Mrs. Hoppner) 'relating the most hideous stories against him,'—words certainly not justified by the published passages of Shelley's letter. Dealing thus, in the opening of her letter, with Elise, as though she were the actual slanderer, Mrs. Shelley in a later passage seems to hold Paolo altogether accountable for the calumnies, and to acquit Elise of complicity in his wickedness. Yet, towards the close of the epistle (addressed to Mrs. Hoppner), reflecting bitterly on her former nurse, Mrs. Shelley bids Mrs. Hoppner withdraw her confidence from 'one so vile as Elise.' Both in her letter to Mrs. Hoppner and in the accompanying note to her own husband, Mrs. Shelley refers to Byron's disbelief of the slanders; whereas the published passages of Shelley's letter afford no grounds for these references to Byron's incredulity, and even justify a suspicion that the generous disbelief for which Mrs. Shelley was so grateful, was merely her presumption. Possibly the production of the original documents would dispel these apparent inconsistencies and inaccuracies. As they stand before the world, however, the published passages of Mrs. Shelley's letter comprise several perplexing sentences. On the main points of the slanders, however, Mrs. Shelley is direct, and admirably strenuous. Nothing of its kind can well be stronger than this:—

'But now I come to the accusations, and I must summon all my courage while I transcribe them, for tears will force their way, and how can it be otherwise? You knew Shelley. You saw his face, and could you believe them?—believe them only on the testimony of a girl whom

that, although strangers might believe the calumnies that this man propagated, none who had ever seen my husband could for a moment credit them. He says Claire was Shelley's mistress—that—upon my word I solemnly assure you that I cannot write the words. I send you a part of Shelley's letter, that you may see what I am now about to refute; but I had rather die than copy anything so vilely, so wickedly false, so beyond imagination fiendish.—But that you should believe it! That my beloved Shelley should stand thus slandered in your minds—he, the gentlest, the most humane of creatures—is more painful to me—oh far more painful—than words can express. Need I say that the union between my husband and myself has never been disturbed? Love caused our first imprudence; love which improved by esteem, a perfect trust one in the other, a confidence and affection which, visited as we have been by severe calamities (have we not lost *two* (*sic*) children?), has increased daily, and knows no bounds. I will add that Claire has been separated from us for about a year. You ought to have paused before you tried to convince the father of her child of such unheard-of atrocities on her part. If his generosity and knowledge of the world had not made him reject the slander with the ridicule it deserved, what irretrievable mischief you would have occasioned her! Those who know me will believe my simple word. It is not long ago that my father said, in a letter to me, that he had never known me utter a falsehood; but you—easy as you have been to credit evil, you may be more deaf to truth—to you I swear by all that I hold sacred in Heaven and Earth, by a vow which I should die to write if I affirmed a falsehood,—I swear by the life of my child —my blessed, beloved child—that I know the accusation to be false.'

Addressed to Mrs. Hoppner, this letter was sent to Shelley at Ravenna, for him to forward it to the lady at Venice; the note which accompanied it to Shelley's hands, contained the writer's earnest request to him, to copy the epistle, before sending it on. 'Pray,' said Mrs. Shelley, 'get my letter to Mrs. H. copied, for a thousand reasons,'—meaning, of course, to keep the copy

Hoppners had exacted from Lord Byron that these accusations should be concealed from *me*. Lord Byron is not a man to keep a secret, good or bad, but in openly confessing that he has not done so, he must observe a certain delicacy, and therefore he wished to send the letter himself, and indeed this adds weight to your representations.'

It is inconceivable that Shelley really thought what he pretended to think, viz., that his wife wished him to make a fair copy of her letter, for Mrs. Hoppner's perusal. He knew right well *why* Mary told him to copy the letter. He misconstrued her words wilfully, because he did not wish her to have a copy of the letter at her hand,—to remind her of the circumstances that had caused her to write it. Paying proper regard to her repeated injunction, he would have copied not only her written words, but also that part of his own letter of the 7th instant, which she had made a substantive part of her own epistle. This she asked him to do. Instead of doing what she told him, he pretended to have misunderstood her request, and at the same time informed her that her vindictory letter had been given to Byron, for transmission to Mrs. Hoppner.

This vindictory letter was *not* transmitted by Byron to Mrs. Hoppner. On the contrary, after Byron's death, it was found amongst his papers, and at some later time passed to the hands of the present Sir Percy Shelley. With law and logic resembling his knowledge of the simplest rules of evidence, Mr. Froude wrote of this letter in his notorious *Nineteenth-Century* article, 'It was not addressed to Byron; it therefore never belonged to Byron; and a property which was not his own could not descend to his representatives.' What egregious nonsense! What should be thought of the readers of the *Nineteenth Century*, who accept such foolishness as sound literature? What living writer but Mr. Froude could venture to declare it impossible for a man to acquire property in a letter, *not* addressed to him? Were the *dictum* good law, the trustees of the British Museum would have no property in any one of their several thousands of ancient letters. Mr. Alfred Morrison would not have property in any of his thousands of epistles, *not* addressed to himself. On coming to Shelley's hands at Ravenna, Mrs. Shelley's vindictory letter was as much his property as any ring on his finger. Written by his own wife (who had no property of her own) on paper bought with his money, the epistle belonged to Shelley. The legal property of the docu-

ment was in him and no one else. He had as perfect legal power to give the epistle to Byron, as to give any other of his lawful possessions to Byron. There are grounds for the strongest opinion that Shelley did give the letter to Byron—not to transmit to Mrs. Hoppner, *but* to do what he liked with it; and that, therefore, the letter at his death passed to his representatives.

Shelley himself admits that he gave the letter. 'I have,' he writes to his wife, 'given it to Lord Byron,' adding that Byron 'has engaged to send it with his own comments, to the Hoppners.' Apart from these words, there is no evidence whatever that Byron promised to transmit the letter to the Hoppners;—words written by a man of such singular mental inexactness, that his most intimate friends held him absolutely incapable of giving an accurate account of any matter of his personal affairs;—a man, who wrote wheedling letters, and deliberately deceitful letters, whenever he was tempted to do so;—a man, who only the other day had written his wife a flagrantly inaccurate account of what Byron had told him of the Claire scandal. Is the bare statement of so inexact a letter-writer to be held good evidence, that Byron withheld a letter he was bound in honour to pass on to Mrs. Hoppner? Is it probable that Shelley had authority for writing to his wife, that Byron had promised to transmit the letter and enclosure? If he was inaccurate in this statement, Shelley was merely guilty of an inaccuracy, comparable with scores of similar inaccuracies to be found in his private epistles. Is it conceivable that Byron promised to transmit to the Hoppners an epistle, which represented him as having said of them divers things which he certainly had not said of them?

Shelley's letter of the 7th instant to his wife was posted to

After perusing the two documents of the reply, Byron, of course, spoke to Shelley to this effect: 'My dear Shelley, in your excitement you gave Mrs. Shelley a strangely inaccurate account of what passed between us on the night of your arrival. What I told you was, that the Hoppners had been induced to regard Claire as your mistress, to think *she* had given you a child, and to think *she* had sent the child to a Foundling. This was what I told you. But you have told your wife a very different story. The Hoppners never spoke of you as tearing the child from Claire's breast; they never accused you of sending the child to a Foundling against her will; they never hinted to me that, instead of sending the child to a Foundling, you might have destroyed it. Such thoughts of you never entered their heads. How came you to conceive they had such suspicions? They never wronged you in the way you have represented to Mrs. Shelley. They told me you had made a domestic arrangement with Claire, which (as you remark to Mrs. Shelley) would have been no heinous crime, but only "a great error," had you and she entered into the arrangement. They told me Claire had given you a child, even as she gave me one a few years since,—*i.e.* they believed that the arrangement, which in your opinion would have been no worse than "a great error," had been attended with a natural result. Further, they told me that they believed the offspring of the arrangement had been dealt with as illegitimate children are often dealt with in this country. To think this of you is not to believe you tore the child from Claire's breast, disposed of it violently and without her consent, abandoned it *or* perhaps destroyed it. This letter and enclosure may not be sent to Mrs. Hoppner; for they imply that I have told you prodigious untruths. As the epistle touches my honour so acutely, leave it in my hands, and trust to me to communicate with the Hoppners, so as to disabuse their minds completely of their erroneous impressions about you. But do let me retain possession of those sheets of paper, which so strangely misrepresent my confidential speech to you.'

Byron must necessarily have put the case in this way to Shelley. After speaking in this way, it is inconceivable that he promised to send the letter and enclosure to Venice. After being so spoken to by Byron, it is inconceivable that Shelley wished the documents to be sent to Mrs. Hoppner, or was otherwise than well pleased to know Byron could be trusted to keep

them from her eyes. It must have been a great relief to him to think that, instead of sending to Venice the writings which, on coming to the Hoppners, would have been fruitful of mischief, he had shown them to Byron. Of course he made no copy of Mary's letter and enclosure, to remain in evidence how egregiously he had exaggerated the scandalous report, and misrepresented a confidential conversation. But it was necessary for him to acknowledge to Mary his receipt of the documents; to acknowledge them, moreover, in such a way, that she would not be looking to every post for a letter from Mrs. Hoppner; that she should feel assured proper measures were being taken to kill the scandal; that she should not be angry with him for neglecting to copy the papers; and that she should not lose all power of ever again relying on his statements of fact. The author of *Laon and Cythna* was in a very embarrassing and rather humiliating position. His way of accounting for his neglect to copy the documents is sufficiently significant of disingenuousness. It was necessary for him to conceal from his wife that her epistle, so eloquent of fine and womanly feeling, would not be sent on to Mrs. Hoppner; it was necessary for him to allay her impatience for a letter from Mrs. Hoppner, by giving her to understand that she must not expect the lady's reply to come quickly; it was necessary for him to provide against further importunity on her part for copies of the documents. In submission to these necessities he had recourse to misrepresentation. Affecting to have mistaken her purpose in requesting him to take copies of the writings, he informed her he had given her epistle, with the piece of his own epistle, to Byron,—an announcement calculated to make her feel she could scarcely repeat her request for copies without implying distrust of Lord Byron's discretion and zeal. At the same time, he

pressure of a rather comical embarrassment, he practised on his wife the kind of deceit he so often employed in his dealings with other people. Acquitting Byron of the villainy imputed to him by Mr. Froude, a villainy very different from the immoralities with which he is justly chargeable, it merely imputes to Shelley the particular kind of underhandedness and inaccuracy, of which so many examples may be found in his dealings with various people. Had Byron sent the letter to Mrs. Hoppner, it would of course have been accompanied with explanations, showing that he was not accountable for the exaggerations and staggering misstatements of Shelley's letter (of 7th August) to his wife. Knowing this, Shelley had even a stronger motive than Byron for stopping the letter. Under these circumstances, it is absurd to argue from the mere retention of the letter, that it was retained dishonestly by the elder poet, in breach of a solemn promise.

There is no reason to suppose Byron was wanting in fidelity to Shelley in any stage of this business. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, he must be assumed to have kept his promise, to do his utmost to convince the Hoppners of the untruth of the scandalous story, so far as it affected the Shelleys. There is at present no evidence that he either failed to keep this promise, or failed to satisfy the Hoppners of Shelley's innocence. Under existing circumstances, the only fair assumption is that he wrote to the Hoppners on the matter, and made it clear to them that Shelley neither was nor ever had been the father of a child by Claire. It makes nothing against the reasonableness of this assumption, that Mrs. Shelley received no letter from Mrs. Hoppner on the subject, and that the Hoppners never again had any intercourse with her. Having received no letter from Mrs. Shelley on the matter, Mrs. Hoppner was under no obligation to write to her about it. Indeed, under the circumstances, it would have been something worse than an insulting impertinence, had the Consul-General's wife written to Mrs. Shelley on so unsavoury a business. To set the ugly matter right, it was not necessary for Byron to let Mrs. Hoppner know her name had been mentioned to the Shelleys in connexion with the scandal; and the reasons why he should be silent on that point are obvious. That the Hoppners never again communicated with Mrs. Shelley is no evidence that they continued to think ill of her. Mrs. Shelley and Mrs. Hoppner

had never corresponded with one another for any considerable time. Mrs. Shelley's intercepted letter (of 10th August, 1821) opens with these words: 'My dear Mrs. Hoppner, after silence of *nearly two years*, I address you again,'—words showing conclusively the shortness of the period, during which the two ladies (who met for the first time no earlier than the autumn of 1818) were in the habit of writing to one another. Correspondents only for a single year, they had, in August, 1821, ceased to correspond for nearly two years. In truth, though the Shelleys, during their 1818 visits to and sojourn near Venice, received great kindness from the Hoppners (especially at the moment of little Clara's death), the two ladies were casual acquaintances,—slight acquaintances, notwithstanding their intimacy for a brief period. How common is it for people to live sociably with persons for a few months, and then see no more of them! Had Mrs. Shelley in her later time met the Hoppners, she would probably have been greeted by them in a way to satisfy her, that they had no wish to avoid her as a discreditable person. But never meeting them after 1818, she went from 1821 to her grave, imagining they persisted in thinking evil of her.

Though Byron's March-1821 note to Hoppner defines the main facts of the scandalous story, it gives none of the minor details of the slander, that seems to have originated in Elise's general knowledge of the Genevese scandal and her subsequent misconceptions respecting Allegra's paternity. Had that note been as ample as it was precise, it would have enabled us to see how far the slander (credited by Byron and Hoppner) was the pure outgrowth of Elise's misconceptions, and in what degree it resulted from Paolo's malicious inventiveness,—and also to gauge more precisely the element of inaccuracy in Shelley's

Paolo to Hoppner; through Hoppner to Mrs. Hoppner; from the Hoppners to Byron; from Byron's cynical lips to Shelley's heated brain; through Shelley's inaccurate pen to Mrs. Shelley. Elise, Paolo (a liar of great ability), Hoppner, Mrs. Hoppner, Byron (not remarkable for accuracy of statement), and Shelley (a prodigy of historical inventiveness):—all and each of these six persons had worked in some way or other on the scandal, before it came to Mary at Bagni di Pisa! No wonder the story was a marvellous and extremely exciting story on coming to poor Mrs. Shelley.

The liar in the business was, of course, Paolo, the clever, vindictive, unscrupulous knave, set on avenging himself on the master, who had declined to be cheated beyond a hundred per cent. Certainly guilty of the venial offence of indiscreet and disloyal loquacity, Elise was probably also guilty of encouraging her husband in his purpose to extort more money from her bountiful employers. Her passionate assertion that she had said nothing against the Shelleys to Mrs. Hoppner (*'Je vous assure, ma chère Madame Shelley,'* she wrote in reply to a letter from her former mistress, *'que je n'ai jamais rien dit à Madame Hoppner ni contre vous, ni contre Mademoiselle, ni contre Monsieur, et de quelque part que cela vienne c'est un mensonge contre moi'*) does not acquit her of talking freely to her husband against them. It tells much and suggests more against the smart Elise that, for months after her husband had put himself (with his wife's cognizance) in communication with the Hoppners, she was writing to Mrs. Shelley for money;—a kind of demand the woman would, of course, have never made on her former mistress, had she not felt she had a most unusual claim on her. Only a day or two before Mrs. Shelley perused her husband's staggering letter from Ravenna, Mrs. Shelley had received a letter from Elise, asking for more money. 'The other day,' Mrs. Shelley wrote in her intercepted letter to Mrs. Hoppner, 'I received a letter from Elise, entreating, with great professions of love, that I would send her money'!!! More than two and a half years had passed since she quitted the Shelleys' service, and yet Elise was writing for money to her former mistress. Elise had never said anything to Mrs. Hoppner against either Mrs. Shelley or Mademoiselle Claire or Shelley; but she had said things against all three to Paolo, who had carried them to Mr. Hoppner.

Papal territory, were waiting at Florence for marching orders from Byron, whose sojourn at Ravenna had for some time been prolonged only by indecision as to his future movements, Shelley was urgent that Byron should withdraw the child from the nuns, to whose custody she had been committed, only till some more eligible home could be found for her.

It cannot be said that Shelley's intercourse with Byron at Ravenna was fruitful of wise decisions. Concluding that the question of Allegra's future education might stand over (a conclusion for which the elder poet's mental unsteadiness and Shelley's inability to propose a better plan for her nurture were equally accountable), Byron, on withdrawing from Ravenna, at the end of October, 1821, left the child at Bagna Cavallo, to die there of fever in the ensuing spring,—the last of the three fated children to perish from the ways of man. In determining to take a Palazzo at Pisa, at Shelley's instance, though not altogether out of deference to his judgment and counsel, Byron decided on a step that in no long time could not be favourable to the cordial and even idolatrous sentiment, with which the younger poet regarded him. On its death such enthusiastic and extravagant hero-worship would necessarily be followed by feeling of an opposite kind; and for the preservation of the sentiment of condescending respect on the one side, and the sentiment of affectionate idolatry on the other side, it was especially needful that the two poets should not be daily associates for any considerable period. Had they continued to live on different sides of Italy, Shelley might have idolized Byron to his last hour, and Byron would never have been irritated by Shelley. In deciding to become neighbours and almost daily companions at Pisa they resolved on a course which, even without the annoyances coming to each of the poets from what may be called the Leigh-Hunt complications, was certain to result in a diminution of their friendliness for one another. It was also in the highest degree inauspicious for their mutual good feeling that the two friends in council agreed in thinking Leigh Hunt the very man who should be invited to the editorial position which Tom Moore had prudently declined to accept.

It devolved on Shelley to write the letter, which invited Leigh Hunt to come out from England and join his correspondent and 'noble friend' Lord Byron, in establishing *The*

his equally extortionate and ungovernable admirer, and at making himself in a position to render his charming friend a substantial service, Shelley (writing to Hunt from Pisa on 26th August, 1821,) invested the project with the roseate colouring most likely to heighten its attractiveness to Hunt. He even went so far as to assure Hunt that he would be Byron's partner on equal footing and equal terms; that, whilst taking one-half of the revenue from the magazine, he would contribute, though in a different manner, no less than Byron to the success of their joint enterprise. How far was Shelley sincere in such extravagance? There is, no doubt, such a thing as honest adulation; and it is possible that for the moment Byron and Leigh Hunt were equals in fame and achievement to the poet, who, a short while earlier or later, declared himself a mere earthworm in comparison with the godlike author of *Cain*,—

‘the worm beneath the sod
May lift itself in homage of the God.’

Declaring he would participate neither in the profits nor the borrowed splendour of such a partnership, as should give the world a successful *Liberal*, Shelley was ready to act as the connecting link between the two poets, who were in the same degree superior to him in literary eminence and power. With all his vanity and intellectual arrogance, Hunt had, of course, enough worldly knowledge and mental sobriety to be aware that he and Byron were other than equals; but all the same it tickled his self-complacence to be told that the author of *Rimini* was no less considerable a personage than the author of *Childe Harold*. Moreover, the excessive praise was an agreeable in-

Since he found shelter from bailiffs at Marlow, and in return afforded the author of *Alastor* similar protection from clamorous creditors, things had gone with Hunt from bad to worse, and from worse to a state of affairs differing in little but name from actual bankruptcy. Drowning men catch at straws, and the sinking Hunt was glad to clutch at so substantial a plank as the proposal from Italy, which, under the smiles of fortune, might prove a seaworthy craft. Knowing well that the proposal was made not so much to Leigh Hunt the poet, as to Leigh Hunt the journalist, who was supposed to be still editor and joint-proprietor of the *Examiner*, and that the proposal was made to him in consideration, or at least not without consideration, of his editorial power to commend the new periodical to public favour, it was of course Hunt's duty, before he closed with the offer, to let both projectors know they might no longer count upon the *Examiner* as an influence for compassing the success of the *Liberal*. Had he been actuated by any sentiment of honour, or by bare commercial honesty, he would not have arranged to leave England without first writing to both Byron and Shelley, 'Your offer having been made under, if not from, a misapprehension respecting my circumstances, I cannot accept it unless you renew it after learning I have ceased to be editor of the *Examiner*.' Instead of treating Byron and Shelley with the candour, which is a chief element in fair dealing between friends, he started for Italy without a shilling of his own money in his pocket, without an income of any kind from any source whatever, and without letting either of them know he had determined his editorial connexion with the powerful newspaper. It was a surprise alike to Shelley and Byron to learn from Hunt, after his arrival at Leghorn, that he was no longer editor of the *Examiner*. There is no escape from the ugly truth that the brilliant, scholarly, irresistibly charming Leigh Hunt went to Italy with the purpose of fixing himself, his wife and children on a nobleman, with whom he had only the slightest acquaintance, and on a far from prosperous friend whose purse he had repeatedly laid under heavy requisitions, and with a clear intention of making them wholly responsible for the maintenance of himself and family for a considerable period. It is also certain that he thus went out to Italy without giving Byron

and Shelley any intimation of his purpose, or any grounds for suspecting it.

Under no conceivable circumstances could the three poets have worked together harmoniously for as many years. They might, however, under conceivable conditions, have accomplished the immediate purpose of their partnership and avoided quarrelling, for eighteen months or even a couple of years, had Hunt been able to get out to Pisa before the end of the autumn, or at the latest by the end of December. But the winds and waves combined with Moore and Murray to defeat the enterprise, to which Hunt looked for preservation from utter financial ruin. It was not his fault that it was near the end of June, 1822, before he entered Leghorn harbour. Showing abundant alacrity in his preparations for leaving England, he would have started for the sunny South at the end of September, had not the vessel, in which he took berths for himself and his numerous family, been detained in England till the 16th of November. From that day till the end of June, his course was a series of vexatious misadventures. Detained for three weeks by bad weather at Ramsgate, he was beaten up and down Channel till the 22nd of December, when his ship put in at Dartmouth. Mrs. Hunt being by that time too ill to proceed, the Hunts migrated to Stonehouse (Plymouth), where they tarried till 22nd May, 1822, on which day they set forth again for Leghorn, in another vessel, that was so fortunate as to reach its destination at the close of June; when nine months had elapsed since the berths were taken on the first vessel.

In the meantime, persons, who disapproved of Byron's alliance with Shelley and Hunt, had been at work to detach him from such dangerous associates, and put him out of conceit

second start for Italy, the friendship of the two Pisan exiles had been rudely shaken by differences.

It is impossible to refrain from smiling at the recollection of the letter, in which Shelley (who declined Polidori's challenge at Geneva on conscientious grounds, and at all stages of his career regarded duelling with reasonable repugnance) averred that, were it not for considerations moving him to do nothing of the kind, he would leave Italy forthwith, and never enter a country inhabited by Byron, unless it were to arrange their difficulties without words. To write in this vapouring vein to a sympathetic correspondent is, of course, a very different thing from sending a message of war at ten paces to so good a shot as the author of *Don Juan*. Enough also is known of Shelley's letters to render it probable that (his brave words to the contrary notwithstanding) he never for sixty consecutive moments seriously thought of 'calling Byron out.' There is no reason to think Shelley an exception to the general rule, that men who mean fighting keep their purpose to themselves till they act upon it. But none the less does the laughably valorous epistle point to a state of discord between the recently harmonious poets, that cannot have tended to quicken or strengthen Byron's friendliness for Hunt, whom he had valued chiefly for being Shelley's *protégé*, and had selected for his literary coadjutor at Shelley's request.

Whilst Hunt necessarily suffered in Byron's regard from the mere decline of the last-named poet's friendliness for Shelley, he suffered in the same respect also from a singular indiscretion into which Shelley was betrayed by his desire to serve the author of *Rimini*. Driven to Plymouth by stress of weather and the state of his wife's health, Hunt, who had made the false start for Italy with an insufficiently furnished pocket, soon found himself under the necessity of begging Shelley to send him money from Pisa. To the weather-bound adventurer it, of course, appeared that, as he was bound for Italy at Byron's invitation to co-operate with him in an important enterprise, he had a moral right to look to him for a remittance; and had he, in regard to his financial position, dealt frankly with the famous and affluent poet, few readers would decline to recognize Hunt's title to needful assistance. It was under these circumstances that, instead of writing straight to Byron on the subject (which would have been the manlier course), Hunt wrote from

England not once, but repeatedly, to Shelley, to do for his benefit what he should have done for himself, in a letter addressed to Byron. Explaining the causes of his urgent need of money, Hunt moved Shelley to ask Byron for it. As it would doubtless have been less disagreeable to him to increase his more considerable than burdensome debt to Shelley, than to open his business relations with Byron by asking for a not trifling loan, it is probable that the request to Shelley to get the money from Byron was only Hunt's way of asking Shelley to supply it from his own pocket. Anyhow, the request caused Shelley to empty his pocket into Hunt's hands, rather than apply for money to Byron (with whom he was still on uneasy terms, though they had recently arranged their differences) and send Hunt 150*l.*—a gift that reduced to less than 40*l.* the donor's reserve of money for his own current expenses.

In addition to the 150*l.* sent to Hunt, Shelley was ready to give him any sum for which *Charles the First* could be sold. In brief, Shelley was ready to do anything for the relief of his protégé, with the exception of going either to Lord Byron or to the Jews. But all he could do, without taking either of these steps, was insufficient for Hunt, who, pocketing the remitted money, wrote back to Pisa that Byron must be pressed for more. Thus driven, Shelley committed the indiscretion (to which reference has been made) in writing Byron this remarkable letter:—

‘ *Pisa, February 15th, 1822.*

‘ MY DEAR LORD BYRON,

‘ I enclose you a letter from Leigh Hunt, which annoys me on more than one account. You will observe the postscript, and you know me well enough to feel how painful the task is set me in commenting upon it. Hunt had urged me more than once to ask you to lend him this money. My answer consisted in sending him all I could spare, which I have now literally done. Your kindness in fitting up a part of your own house for his accommodation I sensibly felt, and willingly accepted from you on his part, but, believe me, without the slightest intention of imposing, or, if I could help it, allowing to be imposed, any heavier task on your purse. As it has come to this, in spite of my exertions, I will not conceal from you the low ebb of my own money affairs in the present moment, that is, my absolute incapacity of assisting Hunt farther.

‘ I do not think poor Hunt's promise to pay in a given time is worth very much; but mine is less subject to uncertainty, and I should be happy to be responsible for any engagement he may have proposed to

you. I am so much annoyed by this subject that I hardly know what to write, and much less what to say; and I have need of all your indulgence in judging both my feelings and expressions. I shall see you by-and-by.

‘ Believe me, yours most faithfully and sincerely,

‘ P. B. SHELLEY.’

Written to support Hunt's direct application to Byron for a remittance, Shelley's affectionate concern for the whole of the Hunt party puts it beyond question, that this epistle was written sincerely in the interest of the unfortunate man of letters, and without a notion of the injury it would do him in Byron's esteem. It was Shelley's way of saying, ‘ Do lend the poor fellow the money on *my* personal security;’ and to readers bearing in mind the delicacy and tension that had succeeded the previous friendly relations of the two poets, it cannot be surprising that Shelley found himself unable to make such a request of Byron, without saying at the same time that he had done his utmost for his friend's relief. All the same, the letter gave a view of Hunt's character and dealings, that lowered him in the regard of the poet, who with generous incaution had fitted up rooms for the necessitous family in the Palazzo Lanfranchi. Opening Byron's eyes to several matters, it informed him, that Hunt had for some time been sponging on the slender resources of his too yielding friend; that Hunt had for some time been pressing Shelley to apply to the Palazzo Lanfranchi for money; that Hunt's direct application to the lord of that palazzo had not been made till the petitioner had done his utmost to force Shelley to prefer the request for him; that the applicant for a remittance had constrained Shelley to join in the request he had refused to make by himself. The letter must have caused Byron to suspect that Hunt had in former years bled Shelley copiously, and have shown him how powerless Shelley was to hold his own against the cool and clever practitioner of the art of getting money, without either earning it or stealing it. Byron's comment on Shelley's letter must have been to this effect: ‘ So that is Mr. Hunt's way of handling Shelley, is it? He won't handle me so easily.’

Byron's treatment of the Hunts in Italy displayed some of his least amiable traits. He should not have failed in courtesy to Mrs. Hunt, who was a *woman* and an invalid. He might

have been more gracious, without being less firm, to the *man*. It was paltry of him, in his reasonable annoyance with the equally elegant and unscrupulous adventurer, to give an untrue account of the circumstances that determined him to start the *Liberal*. But on learning, at the end of June, from Hunt's lips, that he had ceased to be editor of the *Examiner*, and was for the moment without a crown in his pocket, or without any means whatsoever for paying the weekly bills of his numerous family in the lower rooms of the Palazzo Lanfranchi, the author of *Don Juan* had good reason for feeling that, besides being on his guard against pecuniary imposition, he had better let Hunt see clearly, and at once, that he (the author of *Don Juan*) would not submit tamely to exaction.

No less ignorant than Byron of the desperate state of his friend's pecuniary affairs,—a state amounting to absolute destitution so far as the term is applicable to a clever man of letters,—till he spoke with Hunt at Leghorn, Shelley must have felt himself in a peculiarly delicate and painful position in regard to Byron, on hearing that their partner in the *Liberal* was alike without income and any prospect of income, apart from the literary project, which was still only a project. For months he had been aware of the degree in which Byron was influenced by the advisers, who were entreating him to withdraw even at the last moment from his entanglement with the Hunts. For months he had been aware in how great a degree Byron had lost confidence in the literary venture, and how gladly he would have discovered a way of withdrawing honourably, and at no excessive cost, from an enterprise which he deemed foredoomed to failure. For months he had, in Hunt's interest, maintained a hollow show of his former admiration for, and of his former attachment to, Byron, encouraging him to recover his former confidence in their joint enterprise, and to be assured that, on the arrival of

editor of the *Examiner*.' When Hunt at length appeared on the scene, he was *not* editor of the *Examiner*.

Entering his Pisan home on the 1st November, 1821, Byron took up his abode in the stately house at a time when his relations with Shelley were altogether cordial, and Shelley's admiration of him was at its highest extravagance. Delighted with his reception and treatment at Ravenna in the previous August, Shelley had now spent more than two months in emotions of generous and romantic worship of Byron's greatness; and it was his fortune, perhaps his good fortune, to regard Byron with the same idolatrous enthusiasm for something more than another two months, before his admiration of so angelic a being was qualified by painful suspicions that he had rated his idol somewhat too highly,—suspicions followed at a brief interval by the differences which, but for his concern for Hunt's interests, would, perhaps, have caused 'the worm' to turn and writhe in open mutiny against 'the God.'

Fascinated at Ravenna by the great poet's courtesies and flattering manifestations of confidence, Shelley exulted for a brief while in the prospect of figuring before the world as the great Byron's peculiar and most influential friend. Whilst it is curious to observe in his letters from Ravenna to his wife, and in some of his subsequent epistles to Horace Smith, Peacock, and Gisborne, how greatly he was impressed by the pomp and grandeur of his 'noble friend's' domestic arrangements, it is even more interesting to contemplate in the same letters the boyish simplicity and exultation, with which Shelley spoke of the great Byron's regard for him, and of the advantages that would accrue to him from familiar association with so superlative a personage. Possessing the great poet's ear, he enjoyed his confidence. Byron was moving to Pisa in compliance with his advice. It was he (and no other man) who had taken the finest palace on the Lung'Arno of Pisa for the great Byron's sufficient accommodation.

To read attentively certain of the published letters that passed between Shelley and his wife whilst he was at Ravenna, is to see how they frightened one another through the post into imagining themselves the victims of a conspiracy that aimed at rendering their lives miserable and their future;—to see also how, for several days after the fact, they should not have failed to nurse the wild and terrifying as a woman and an invalid. themselves

guard themselves and their child from death by poison or the knife, it was needful for them to surround themselves with powerful friends.

That Mary might not resist his purpose of staying another winter and spring in the city, where he would have Byron for his neighbour and most familiar associate, Shelley instructed her to rate at their proper worth the security and protection she and her husband would derive from Byron's countenance:—security and protection they might sorely need at Florence or any other Italian capital, now that they had been selected for exemplary persecution by the fanatical enemies of Free Thought. That they had provoked the animosity of implacable adversaries was manifest from what had come to his ears at Ravenna. Instructing his wife that the current calumnies about himself should be regarded as preliminary measures for their destruction, taken by subtle and resolute foes, who would be satisfied with nothing less than his and her ruin, Shelley wished her to realize the perils of their position and determine what course they had better adopt for the preservation of life, liberty, happiness. Though attractive to them for divers considerations, Florence, for reasons darkly hinted at in the correspondence, would now abound

consider another plan for defeating the enemies, banded together for their destruction. Instead of retiring to a desolate island, or offering their breasts to the assassin's dagger at Florence, they might remain at Pisa under conditions that would render existence at the same time safer and more agreeable than heretofore. Instead of traversing the treacherous sea in an open boat to a tenantless island, it would surely be better for her and himself to stay where they were, to surround themselves with a few congenial people, even though the devil should be one of them, and in short to do their best to make themselves happy at Pisa, and the neighbouring Baths, for another twelve months. The Williamses would remain at Pisa, if she and he decided to remain there. The Hunts also would be at Pisa at least for the winter, should Leigh Hunt determine on migrating to Italy. Lord Byron and his Italian friends would be there also; and though the Gambas and Teresa Guiccioli might not be desirable acquaintances from every point of view, Byron's friendship would be invaluable. What had occurred to account for so quick a change of sentiment respecting Florence and the plan of wintering there? Positively nothing besides Byron's determination to settle at Pisa for a few months or years.

As the choice of alternatives lay between emigration to a solitary island and another term of residence at Pisa, it is not surprising that Mrs. Shelley decided in favour of the latter. Whilst few women were less qualified for seclusion, few had a keener appetite for society, than William Godwin's clever and brilliant daughter. The woman, who fretted at the isolation and monotony of her existence at Naples and Rome, would have died of *ennui* or gone mad in a month in the severe seclusion of a sea-girt paradise, with no companions but her husband and her little boy. It had not been her intention to stay another year at Pisa. For several reasons she would have preferred wintering at Florence with the Horace Smiths. She had seen enough of Pisa, and more than enough of some of her 'dirty enough' Pisan acquaintances. But weeks before Byron, with his bodyguard of liveried lacqueys and his menagerie of domesticated animals, took possession of the Palazzo Lanfranchi, she was well pleased with the notion of staying longer at Pisa.

So the circle was formed towards the close of 1821 under favourable auspices:—the circle whose life was described so fully in *The Real Lord Byron*, that its doings need only be alluded to

Guiccioli and the Gambas (Teresa's father and brother, with whom she lived at a short distance from the Lanfranchi palace); the Williamses, of whose social endowments mention has been made on a previous page; pleasant Tom Medwin, whose books afford only faint indications of the elegant taste and generous qualities that endeared him to the author of *Adonais*; handsome, shrewd, adventurous, high-hearted Trelawny, who joined the party at the opening of the year 1822; and Taaffe, the blundering rider and writer, whose clumsy horsemanship occasioned the fracas with the serjeant-major and the guard at the city, that eventually resulted in Byron's migration to Genoa,—the circle of charming and diversely memorable men and women, that had Byron for its planet and Shelley for its chief subordinate luminary. Had the Hunts fulfilled the hopes of their especial friends, and entered Leghorn Harbour in time to keep Christmas at Pisa, the Shelleys would have been, at least for a time, altogether satisfied and delighted with this circle of new and old acquaintances, who had gathered about *them* rather than about the poet of brighter and wider celebrity, whom they had drawn to what may be called their own coterie:—a circle which, though keeping its virtues as far as possible to itself, and having little or nothing to do with the general society of Pisa, or any other set of Pisan visitors, contributed not a little to the enlivenment of the usually tranquil, not to say rather torpid, little town.

The excess of Shelley's enthusiasm for Byron pointed, however, to an inevitable revulsion of feeling, in which the worshiper would probably think as much too lightly, as he had in former time thought far too worshipfully, of his hero. The younger poet's idolatry was, to use a familiar expression, too strong to last. No man of sensibility and self-respect can persist for any great length of time in regarding himself as a worm and his fellow-man and daily companion as a god. To regard one's next-door neighbour as divine to-day, is to regard him as altogether, and in some respects meanly, human six months hence. There were other considerations, to satisfy any clear-sighted and judicial observer of the intercourse of the two poets at Ravenna, and of their regard for one another, that it was not in the nature of things for the man of rank and high celebrity, and the man of very inferior rank and no celebrity to live together for twelve months without friction

and disagreement. In truth, they were never wholly at ease with one another.

Elevated slightly, but only by one or two generations of ancestral dignity, above people of the middle way of life, Shelley possessed precisely the degree of aristocratic quality to render him sensitive for his dignity in his relations with a man of Byron's superior rank; far more sensitive than he would have been had he, like Tom Moore, stepped, by right of genius, from a wine-shop to the salons of 'the great.' At the same time, the uneasiness of his attitude towards Byron, whilst chiefly referable to their difference of social degree, was increased by his sense of Byron's superiority in fame and wealth. How this uneasiness affected Shelley, even when he felt most cordially and idolatrously towards his 'noble friend,' appears from the letter he dated on 10th August, 1821, from Ravenna (*vide* Moore's *Life*) to Mrs. Shelley, where he speaks of his inability to ask money of Byron for Hunt's benefit. 'Lord Byron and I,' he wrote, 'are excellent friends, and were I reduced to poverty, or were I a writer who had no claims to an higher station than I possess,—or did I possess an higher than I deserve, we should appear in all things as such, and I would freely ask him any favour. Such is not now the case. The demon of mistrust and pride lurks between two persons in our situation, poisoning the freedom of our intercourse.'

Though he did not go to Ravenna *in order* to confer with Byron on Hunt's affairs, Shelley journeyed thither *with the purpose* of interesting Byron in them. For some time Shelley had been troubled in his mind by the thought of his friend's financial difficulties; and he had not been many hours in the Palazzo Guiccioli, before he found occasion to speak sympathetically of Hunt's pecuniary distress. On hearing how Byron had given the *Memoirs* to Tom Moore, and how Moore had sold them to Murray for 2000*l.*, Shelley grudged Moore the gift that would have been so serviceable to the author of *Rimini*. 'I wish,' he wrote to his wife, 'I had been in time to have interceded for a part of it for poor Hunt.' Though the *Liberal* was altogether Byron's project, it was at Shelley's instance that the projector of the luckless magazine selected Hunt for the position of editorial coadjutor; and whilst making this selection *in* his own interest, though at Shelley's instance, Byron, no doubt, had pleasure in feeling that the arrangement, which pro-

mised advantage to himself, would be beneficial to a struggling man of letters. This fact alone gave the faint colouring of truth to Byron's subsequent mis-statements, respecting the benevolent motives and humane purpose that determined him to start the *Liberal*. At Ravenna (where he carefully refrained from asking Byron to advance money for Hunt's travelling expenses) Shelley could congratulate himself on Byron's offer to take Hunt for his *collaborateur*, without regarding it as a favour done to himself, or thinking of it as a proposal for an arrangement that could, under any contingency, compromise his own independence of, and freedom from, obligation to the poet of exalted rank. The case was altered a few months later, when Byron's vacillation put Shelley under the necessity of doing his utmost to hold him to his engagement with Hunt. On exerting himself for this end, it was natural for the sensitive Shelley to feel that he might be suspected of speaking in his own, no less than in Hunt's, interest; to feel that after all he was asking a pecuniary favour of Byron. In this sensitiveness for his independence, and jealous care to avoid every appearance of seeking or accepting material advantage from his social superior, readers may see the explanation of Shelley's resolve to share neither in the profits nor the *éclat* of the literary enterprise.

Under these circumstances, it would have been passing strange had Shelley persisted in his reverential regard for Byron. In any case, his idolatry of so imperfect a hero would have perished more or less abruptly under the conditions of close intimacy and daily intercourse for a considerable period; but the annoyance, resulting to the younger poet from a state of things which compelled him to combat Byron's irresolution with words, that might expose him to ungenerous suspicion, accelerated the moment for the inevitable revulsion of feeling. The differences which, but for Shelley's devotion to Hunt's interest, would perhaps have developed rapidly into open rupture, were capable of adjustment; but they necessarily resulted in a permanent change in Shelley's feeling for Byron. The differences

about whom he soon began to write and chatter as much too disparagingly as he had formerly written and talked too worshipfully. Instead of flaming into frank rage, he concealed his irritation from his former idol, whilst venting it from time to time in bitter words whispered to Mary's ear, and bitter words written to correspondents, who were not likely to report them to Byron.

The old story of unreasonable hope, ending in unreasonable disappointment, was told yet again,—the story told so often in Shelley's troublous record! Shelley idolized his eldest sister only to discover in a brief while how unworthy she was of his good opinion. The first period of his extravagant admiration of Hogg was followed abruptly by a period in which he detested him. After mistaking Eliza Hitchener for an angel, he soon mistook her for a brown she-devil. Delighting in Eliza Westbrook for a season, he quickly learnt to loathe her. Vowing to love Harriett Westbrook for ever, he found life intolerable with her in less than three nuptial years. Vowing to worship his second wife above all other women, he, in due course, discovered her inferiority to Emilia Viviani and Jane Williams. Meaning to be happy with Hogg for ever, he soon flitted from York, to get out of his way. 'Throwing himself on Byron in August, 1821, with the intention of delighting in him for ever, he quickly began to vapour about fighting him. Either Shelley lacked steadfastness of affection, or was singularly unfortunate in selecting his objects of affection. In this respect he resembled Byron, whom he also resembled in his unamiable and undignified practice of writing bitterly of people whom he had ceased to love.

On passing from affection for his sister Elizabeth, he wrote in angry disparagement of her. On coming to uneasy terms with his mother, he wrote disdainfully of her mental narrowness. On ceasing to delight in Eliza Hitchener, he wrote of her that she was a brown demon and an hermaphrodite. After idolizing Mrs. Boinville, he wrote about her insincerity. After quarrelling with Eliza Westbrook, he wrote of her that she was a loathsome worm. Writing thus of women with whom he was out of humour, he dealt in the same way with men he no longer liked. Having loved his father in his childhood, he was only at manhood's threshold when he began to write monstrous untruths to his discredit. In the interval between the

wrote of him that he was a treacherous friend, a libertine, and a seducer. Whilst living in friendship with Thomas Love Peacock, he wrote of him as though he was attached to a free-handed benefactor by considerations of self-interest. Soon after worshipping Byron as a god, he wrote of him (on 2nd March, 1822, to Leigh Hunt) that certain dispositions of his character, rendered him intolerable as an intimate associate, and (on 18th June, 1822, to John Gisborne) that he was 'the nucleus of all that is hateful and tiresome' in society. It is thus Shelley wrote of his former friends after falling out with them. Whilst reflecting with reasonable severity on Byron's readiness to 'libel his friends all round,' the Shelleyan apologists say nothing of Shelley's exhibitions of the same ungenerous propensity.

Whilst Byron vacillated between hope and despair for the success of the *Liberal*, between a cordial disposition to persist in the enterprise and a fainthearted inclination to drop it, Shelley (for Hunt's sake) and Hunt (for his own sake) were determined to hold their unsteady partner to his compact with them. If Byron suspected Shelley and Hunt of a design to use him for their own ends, the suspicion certainly was not groundless. Shelley and Hunt became in a certain sense confederates against their partner, in having an understanding and mutual confidence from which he was excluded. Shelley's chief, though not sole, interest in the affair was his concern for Hunt (his senior by eight years). Had he been acting only for himself, Shelley, on discerning the faintest disposition on Byron's part to withdraw from the venture, would have said, 'If your heart is not in the enterprise, let it be dropt like so many other designs, as a mere project not to be acted upon.' But Shelley was acting in the interest of a friend, to whom he was in the highest degree desirous of rendering substantial service; a

Long before Hunt left England, Shelley knew Byron would fain have withdrawn from the project for starting the *Liberal*, but in his absent friend's interest pressed Byron to persist in the enterprise. Long before he left England, Hunt himself knew that Byron had repented of inviting him to Italy, and would have dropt the project of the magazine, had it not been for Shelley. On sailing from England in May, Hunt knew he was setting out to fix himself on a man who, but for Shelley, would have told him to remain at home,—a fact not to be overlooked in the estimate of Hunt's conduct, in going out to Italy with concealment of the main feature of his financial trouble. From the moment when they combined to hold Byron to an arrangement from which he wished to retire, Shelley and Hunt (acting together in the manner described by Shelley's own pen) were confederates against him, in being set on using him for their own ends against his own will.

One would like to know how far Byron was cognizant of the irritation he caused Shelley by his vacillations about the literary project. Yet more one would like to know to what extent he was aware of Shelley's permanent change of feeling for him. It is difficult to conceive that so sensitive a man failed to detect the change of sentiment. But Byron's egotism may have blinded him to what his sensibility would otherwise have discovered. On the other hand, it must be remembered that, in his loyalty to the absent Hunt, and in his keen desire to nurse Byron's favour and influence for Hunt's benefit, Shelley was at great pains to conceal from his former idol the deep-seated alteration of his regard for him. It is conceivable that, notwithstanding the February 'differences,' Byron never knew how completely he had fallen from Shelley's heart and homage. Anyhow, the two poets remained in daily intercourse with one another, and maintained a show of undiminished friendliness. Playing billiards with Byron, and contending with him in pistol-practice, Shelley often figured in the Byronic riding-parties, and appeared at the weekly dinner-parties of the Palazzo Lanfranchi. At the same time Mrs. Shelley lived sociably with Teresa Guiccioli.

CHAPTER XVI.

CLOSING SCENES.

Shelley's Attachment to Jane Williams—Her Womanly Goodness—Her Devotion to her Husband—*The Serpent is shut out from Paradise—Essay on the Devil* Shelley's Happiness and Discord with Mary—Her Remorseful Verses—Trials of her Married Life—*Essay on Christianity*—San Terenzo and Lerici—The Casa Magni Mary's Illness and Melancholy at San Terenzo—Arrival of the 'Don Juan'—Mutual Affection of Mrs. Shelley and Mrs. Williams—Shelley's latest Visions and Hallucinations—Leigh Hunt's Arrival in Italy Shelley sails for Leghorn—Meeting of Shelley and Hunt—Improvement in Shelley's Health—His Mediation between Hunt and Byron—The Hunts in the Palazzo Lanfranchi—Lady Shelley's Account of the Difficulties between Byron and Shelley—Shelley's Contentment with his Arrangements for the Hunts—He sets Sail for Lerici—The Fatal Storm—Cremation on the Sea-shore—Grave at Rome.

THE time has come for a few more words about Shelley's attachment to Jane Williams,—the last of the series of fair women who successively inspired him with feelings of adorative fondness, that, differing widely from such love as animated Byron towards his several mistresses, differed no less widely from the placid preferences of passionless friendship. No sympathetic student of the poet's character and story can entertain even a momentary suspicion of the refinement and purity of Shelley's regard for the gentle and fine-natured woman, to whom he addressed the saddest and sweetest poetry of his life's closing term. To say this of the feelings that swayed his soul in all its successive services of homage towards his friend's wife, is indeed to say no more than I would declare of each and all of the so-called platonic attachments that preceded his worship of Jane Williams.

I have no shadow of a doubt that the always abundant and

mental idiosyncrasy. But in respect to some of these so-called platonic attachments, this conviction is raised to still higher certainty by the conditions, under which Shelley approached the objects of his sentimental preference, or by the characteristics of the women he distinguished so highly. Though it would be absurd to infer anything from the moral rectitude or the delicacy of the young lady, who asked money of her poetical worshiper, and passed from her convent into wedlock only to be separated from her husband, after leading him (to use Mrs. Shelley's expression) 'a devil of a life' for a very brief while, the conditions, under which Shelley was permitted to have personal intercourse with Emilia Viviani, put it beyond question that, in their curious intimacy, he never strayed beyond the lines of social decorum and conventional propriety. In the case of Emilia's successor, confidence in the purity of Shelley's passion, and in the delicacy of his addresses, is raised even higher,—is raised, indeed, to absolute certainty,—by the moral excellences of the lady, and all her domestic circumstances, as well as by all the other conditions and features of a friendship that, even in the tenderest and warmest of its emotional developments, could not have been more innocent had Shelley been a woman.

In some particulars the last of Shelley's spiritual passions resembled his wilder and more tumultuous idolatry of Emilia Viviani. Just as he worshipped Emilia because fancy tricked him into thinking her a realization of his long-cherished ideal of all that was or could be admirable in womankind, he idolized Jane Williams as an example of the particular type of feminine loveliness that swayed his imagination whilst he was composing *The Sensitive Plant*. Whilst he worshipped Jane as the veritable realization of a pure anticipatory cognition, even as he had worshipped Emilia a year earlier for her imaginary correspondence to a more comprehensive conception of feminine excellence, Shelley rendered the homage of his spiritual devotion to Mrs. Williams in a way that reminds one of his manner of wooing Emilia. Associating his wife with himself in his addresses to Emilia, he made Jane's husband a sympathetic co-operator in his addresses to Mrs. Williams, by selecting him for the fittest possible confidant of his affectionate regard for the lady, and even inducing him to act as the medium through which she received his friend's adoration. There were indeed occasions when Wil-

recipients of the homage which she alone evoked, Mary being, at the same time, imperfectly cognizant of the course of the platonic suit to which Jane's husband consented. In a former page I spoke of the affair with Emilia Viviani as a kind of three-cornered flirtation. The same term is applicable to the affair in which Edward Williams was scarcely less a principal than his wife and Shelley. The two three-cornered flirtations differed, however, in the fact that the later of them had a deeply interested, though by no means equally gratified, spectator of something of the proceedings. This spectator was Mary, who, whilst cognizant of the general progress of what she cannot be supposed to have approved, was kept wholly in the dark as to some of its incidents. Whilst Williams consented sympathetically to an affair of which he knew every particular, Mrs. Shelley consented submissively (though, of course, by no means cheerfully) to an affair respecting which she was far from fully informed.

On 26th January, 1822, when no breath of discord had yet ruffled his relations with Byron, Shelley, from his own apartment in the same house in which the Williamses had a set of rooms (a house on the Lung'Arno, but divided by the river from Byron's palazzo), sent Williams *The Serpent is shut out from Paradise*, together with the characteristic note, which instructed Williams, that he might read to 'Jane, but to no one else,' the poem, containing the confession :

'Therefore, if now I see you seldomer,
Dear friends, dear friend ! know that I only fly
Your looks, because they stir
Grief that should sleep, and hopes that cannot die :
The very comfort that they minister

The little effort of literary mystification, to be observed in the note which accompanied these verses to Edward Williams, affords another point of resemblance between the Emilia-Viviani affair and the affair with Jane Williams. Just as the *Epi-psychidion* was offered to the public with a preface which attributed the composition to the real author's 'unfortunate friend' who 'died at Florence, as he was preparing for a voyage to one of the wildest of the Sporades,' the verses are offered to Edward Williams as poetry taken from the portfolio in which the poet's friend used 'to keep his verses,'—the object of this misrepresentation to Williams and Jane, who were in the real author's confidence, being less than obvious. Given, of course, for a reason no less sufficient than manifest, the direction that the verses should be shown to *no one but Jane* was, no doubt, duly observed by the receivers of the poem. Williams, in his diary, may well have styled the verses 'beautiful, but too melancholy lines.' One can imagine how commiseratingly the happy husband and wife (to whom the verses were sent, or rather the husband *through* whom the verses were transmitted, and the wife *to* whom they were addressed) spoke of the wretchedness of their friend who, in his inability to find contentment, such as their own mutual happiness, in the society of his Mary, spoke of his chambers in the same house (the Tre Palazzi) as his 'cold home.' It is certainly less surprising that Shelley desired the verses to be withheld from Mary, than that he was so communicative respecting the cheerlessness of the apartment, of which she was the mistress.

A brief note on the poem's first line ('The serpent is shut out from Paradise'), written at a time when it was Byron's humour to call Shelley 'the serpent' or 'the snake.' Accepting the title in good part, and indeed as a compliment, Shelley, only a few weeks before sending the verses to the Williamses, had written to Byron about the culprit, who was *not* burned at Lucca for scattering the eucharistic wafers from the altar, 'I hear this morning that the design, which certainly had been in contemplation, of *burning my fellow serpent*, has been abandoned, and that he has been condemned to the galleys.' Knowing how Shelley regarded the serpent as typical of the wisdom, that is especially hateful to bigots, and delighted in regarding himself as akin to the serpent in being largely endowed with the same

wisdom, Byron had of course more reasons for calling him 'the snake' than he troubled himself to declare, when he observed 'Goethe's *Mephistophilus* calls the serpent who tempted Eve "my aunt the renowned snake"; and I always insist that Shelley is nothing but one of her nephews, *walking about on the tip of his tail*'; a peculiarly Byronic flippancy that appears in the concluding paragraph of Shelley's *Essay on the Devil*—' . . . before this misconduct it hopped along upon its tail; a mode of progression which, if I was a serpent, I should think the severer punishment of the two.'

Few readers will question that this remarkable coincidence of humour and verbal form in the Byronic utterance and the Shelleyan essay (an essay withheld from the public eye long after the death of both poets) should be deemed a clear indication, that Byron either perused the essay or was the originator of at least one of its humorous sallies. If Byron did not take the thought and words from the essay, Shelley must be assumed to have taken them from him. To the present writer the coincidence is part of the superabundant evidence that, Byron was accountable for the piquancy, incisiveness, and Don-Juanesque levity that distinguish the *Essay on the Devil* from all Shelley's other prose productions. For the purpose of exalting the younger at the expense of the elder poet, many extravagant things have been written about Shelley's influence on Byron. That Shelley influenced Byron greatly is unquestionable, but it is not to be supposed the influences arising from the close, and for a while harmonious, intercourse of the two poets, were altogether one-sided,—that whilst receiving much from his familiar companion, Byron gave him nothing. The *Essay on Christianity* and the *Essay on the Devil* are distinctly assignable to the same period of Shelley's literary productiveness; and to turn from

1814? whether, in addition to trouble, for which he is in no degree to be held responsible, she has endured trouble he either caused her, or might have preserved her from? whether her anticipations of felicity from their association have been realized? whether, in brief, their marriage has been a happy one?

Much has been written of the perfect happiness that came to both Shelley and Mary from their association. It has been proclaimed by romantic biography that the soul of each found its perfect complement in the other's soul, that their conjugal intimacy was singularly felicitous, and that, whilst they dwelt together in harmony seldom accorded to spouses, neither was ever for a single moment disappointed in the other. The present writer ventures to declare no less confidently that their marriage was by no means remarkable for happiness,—that they were not a well-mated couple.

In respect to intellectual endowments and sympathy, it cannot be questioned for a moment that Shelley was more fitly matched with Mary Godwin than with Harriett Westbrook; but mental unison is not sufficient for perfect conjugal concord. I do not suggest that during the eight years' interval between their elopement and Shelley's death they ceased to care for one another. On the contrary, I have no doubt that, loving him with girlish vehemence in the summer of 1814, Mary loved Shelley at the bottom of her heart till the summer of 1822, though (we have her word for it) she sometimes behaved to him so as to imply that his felicity was by no means her chief concern. I have also no doubt, that Shelley never survived his affectionate concern for Mary, though he cannot have delighted in her greatly when he sighed to Emilia, and instructed the Williamses not to let his wife suspect how much happier he was in their rooms of the Tre Palazzi than in his own apartment. It is possible for a married couple to be held strongly by a deep-seated sentiment of mutual dependence, and yet to live on uneasy, and even exasperating, terms, with one another. It was so, at times, with Shelley and Mary. Knowledge comes to the student of human nature from observing how deep-seated attachment sometimes survives superficial sympathy in mated couples. Superficial sympathy must have perished from the mutual regard of Mary and Shelley, when he looked to other women for the higher felicity she was powerless to afford him.

hearts.

Apart from her reasonable grounds of complaint against her husband, Mrs. Shelley was a woman whose lot was fruitful of trouble and trial. Her health was far from good, and during the eight years of her connection with Shelley she endured five (including her miscarriage at San Terenzo) of those illnesses, which, though desired by wives who have never had experience of them, are by no means conducive to physical vigour. She gave birth to four children, and wept over the graves of three of them, losing two of them when they had lived long enough to gain firm hold of her heart. Her grief at the last of these bereavements was excessive. An ardent and strongly affectionate creature (how could Mary Wollstonecraft's daughter be otherwise?), she had in girlhood loved her father and her sisters vehemently. Her half-sister had perished dismally. Through Claire's too fervid temper, and the successive ill-consequences of her luckless alliance with Byron, Mary had (to put the case mildly) derived more vexation than contentment from her close intercourse with her sister-by-affinity. Loving her old father and wishing him well, she was continually receiving doleful intelligence from England that, instead of mending, his affairs grew steadily more desperate. Pining for the diversions of society, she had often fretted at being excluded from it in foreign capitals, no less than in her native country. It was also against the contentment of this unwilling exile from England, that during her successive illnesses and her trials with her children, she never had the consolations of a home, worthy to be called a home. To render existence fairly comfortable in any transient abiding-place, more especially when the abiding-place is a single set of rooms, it is needful for a woman to be an adept in housewifely arts and the smaller domestic economies. But the woman who in her girlhood shirked the matters of the house, to which her step-mother wished her to give attention, was as shiftless and helpless a home-keeper as John Westbrook's daughter. From this lack of housewifely knowingness and capacity, she suffered much and Shelley not a little. One would fain forget that the poet, who has done so much for the happiness of English firesides, never knew the comforts of a home, after passing from Field Place, and that he suffered in this respect chiefly through the incompetence of his wives, both of

whom he took from a social grade in which to keep house cleverly is woman's first duty. Due in no small measure to nervous fancies, Shelley's bodily ailments were due in a larger degree to comfortless feeding. At the same time he suffered from causes, in respect to which his wife was blameless. His temperament would under any circumstances have exposed him to sudden visitations of melancholy; and in the memories that haunted him—memories of the kindred from whom he had estranged himself, and the poor girl who drowned herself in the Serpentine—he had constant sources of sadness.

Even if they had been altogether fitted to one another, Shelley and Mary would in their Italian life have missed the average of connubial enjoyment. But they were not precisely adapted to one another. Whilst his taste was for studious or meditative seclusion, she had been designed by nature for a career of action and gaiety. 'She,' Shelley once said to Trelawny, 'can't bear solitude, nor I society—the quick coupled with the dead.' When he was pining for green fields or sea-breezes, she thought of ball-rooms and assemblies. Under the most auspicious influences their contrarieties of temper would have brought them into conflict. Habitual melancholy is perhaps the most trying temper in a husband, for a wife to endure with patient cheerfulness; and though it was relieved by occasional moods of blithesomeness and jubilant elation, despondency was Shelley's normal condition in his later years. Whilst he harassed Mary with unseasonable and bootless moanings, she worried him with the perversities of her Wollstonecraft vehemence and captiousness,—with the temper that disposed all the Wollstonecrafts to discover egregious insults in trivial slights, and imagine themselves the victims of human malignity whenever the wind blew from the wrong point of the compass.

In other respects Shelley was a trying husband, in whom Mary had reason to be disappointed. At an early stage of their association she discovered how little reliance could be placed on the accuracy of his statements; a cruel mortification for the girl, who had sacrificed so much for him in her romantic belief of all he told her. Natural annoyance at this discovery can have been only mitigated by her ability to refer all his inaccuracies of statement to poetic imaginativeness. Throughout his time with her, Shelley was seeing visions which he mistook

for real occurrences, and telling her stories at manifest discord with historic veracity.

Throughout this biography I have exercised a jealous caution in assigning biographical value to the egotisms of the Shelleyan verse, and have repeatedly cautioned readers against dealing with the poet's references to his former experiences, as good evidence in respect to matters of fact. On the other hand I have not hesitated to regard his poetry as evidential of his temper and sentiment at the moment of its composition. It cannot be questioned that the *Stanzas, written in Dejection, near Naples*, were the result of sincere emotion, and could have been composed only in a mood of the profoundest melancholy. Nor can it be doubted that, whilst displaying the general state of feeling, the *Stanzas* reflect no less faithfully the writer's particular sentiments, during the sorrowful mood. How does Shelley write of himself in these memorable lines, when he had been connubially linked to William Godwin's daughter for something less than three and a half years?

‘Alas ! I have nor hope nor health,
Nor peace within nor calm around,
Nor that content surpassing wealth
The sage in meditation found,
And walked with inward glory crowned—
Nor fame, nor power, *nor love*, nor leisure ;
Others I see whom these surround—
Smiling they live, and call life pleasure :—
To me that cup has been dealt in another measure.’

Without declining to concur in Mr. Rossetti's opinion, that Shelley did not *intend* the reference to his love-less lot to reflect on his wife, I venture to say that, had he been sensible of owing much to her devotion, had she been to him the perpetual spring of gladness that a loving wife ever is to the man who loves her thoroughly, had their union been as felicitous as they hoped it to prove, he could not have thus spoken of himself as alike fameless, powerless, and *love-less*. I even go further, and say that, had their marriage been a happy one, Shelley in his miserable mood would have paused in the enumeration of divers woes, to render grateful acknowledgment of the solace he derived, in the midst of manifold sufferings, from the knowledge that he was *not* unbeloved. It is also a matter of biographical significance that in 1821—the year in which his passion for

Emilia Viviani was succeeded by his milder devotion to Jane Williams—Shelley wrote in *Ginerra* of marriage as

‘life’s great cheat ; a thing
Bitter to taste, sweet in imagining,’—

words of melancholy meaning from the poet, who in the same year confided to the Williamses how wretched he was in his own home. Trelawny, whose acquaintance with Shelley was brief and not of a kind to render him the confidant of the poet’s most delicate secrets, saw enough of Mary’s relations with her husband to make him regard them as something less than altogether happy in their union. That the woman, who in her girlhood had sharp tiffs and lively altercations with her sister Claire, had similar differences with her husband—differences that of course arise frequently between husband and wife without extinguishing their mutual affection, but still differences that *do not* arise between altogether congenial and happily mated couples—we know from Mrs. Shelley’s regretful and penitential verse. How did the sorrowing widow address the spirit of the husband whom she often worried with her perversities?—

‘Oh, gentle Spirit! * * *
* * * * * *

Now fierce remorse and unreplying death
Waken a chord within my heart, whose breath,
Thrilling and keen, in accents audible
A tale of unrequited love doth tell.
It was not anger,—while thy earthly dress
Encompassed still thy soul’s rare loveliness,
All anger was atoned by many a kind
Caress or tear, that spoke the softened mind.—
It speaks of cold neglect, averted eyes,
That blindly crushed thy soul’s fond sacrifice ;—
My heart was all thine own,—but yet a shell
Closed in it’s core, which seemed impenetrable,
Till sharp-toothed misery tore the husk in twain,
Which gaping lies, nor may unite again.
Forgive me!’

(*Vide* Mrs. Shelley’s *The Choice*, a poem of 159 verses, printed in Volume I of Mr. Buxton Forman’s edition of *Shelley’s Works*.)

Penitential utterances, such as this pathetic plaint, should of course be construed generously ; but Mr. Buxton Forman goes

much too far beyond the line, that divides generous construction from sentimental misconstruction, when he says,—

‘I cannot regard this passage as indicating anything more than a natural feeling of remorse in the noble heart of a woman who has suddenly lost an idolized husband, and fancies all kinds of deficiencies in her conduct to him.’

An example of the kind of remorseful confession, to which Mr. Forman’s words would be fairly applicable, appears in the prose, employed by Mrs. Shelley on another occasion to exhibit her bitter sense of her own wifely remissness. Speaking of the melancholy that visited her husband at Naples, Mrs. Shelley says:—

. then he escaped to solitude, and in verses, which he hid from fear of wounding me, poured forth morbid but too natural bursts of discontent and sadness. One looks back with unspeakable regret and gnawing remorse to such periods; fancying that, had one been more alive to the nature of his feelings, and more attentive to soothe them, such would not have existed.’

A general confession of a remorseful sense of not having been all that she should have been to her husband, of regret that she had not been more studious *of* and considerate *for* his feelings, the prose statement is at the most an utterance of sorrowful compunction for shortcomings, that might have been altogether imaginary. Far otherwise is it with the verses of *The Choice*, comprising several distinct statements of fact, which the biographer is bound to consider, without regard to the poetical form, in which they are submitted to his consideration. In them it is asserted by Shelley’s wife, that she was often angry with him, that she made him fully aware of her anger, that she used to atone for her ebullitions of temper by approaching him with tears and appeasing him with caresses, that she persecuted him with sullenness, that even to the last—when anguish at losing him stirred her to sincerity, and swept away the delusions of her vain self-conceit—she was set on making him imagine, and even on persuading herself, that he was something less than lord and master of her whole heart. Are we to suppose that, in respect to each of these positive assertions, Mrs. Shelley was the dupe of her imagination;—that she was never angry with her husband, never made him sensible of her anger, never kissed him into forgiving her exhibitions of petulance, never punished him with sullen and

averted eyes, never pretended that her heart was not wholly in his possession? The Shelleyan vindicators, who never hesitate to take the poet's words *au pied de la lettre*, whenever the severest and most literal way of construing his poetical egotisms favours their belief in his superhuman goodness, are the last persons who should reduce Mrs. Shelley's series of positive assertions into a mere show of natural regret, that she was not so good a wife as she might have been. To me and most readers of this page, her statements must remain evidence, on her own confession, that her life with Shelley was fruitful of the bickerings and contentions, the petty pettishnesses and paltry petulances, the divergences of sentiment and conflicts of feeling, that so often qualify the contentment, and only too often end in extinguishing the mutual affection, of mated couples.

And small the blame to William Godwin's daughter, that she was guilty of all the positive offences with which she charged herself in the criminatory and penitential verses! Had she erred far more grievously, a generous sympathy would stir every large-hearted and impartial judge of her case, to become her advocate at least to the extent of pleading, that she received from the husband, whom she loved, precisely the slights, so sensitive and proud and quick-tempered a woman would necessarily find exasperating and intolerable in the highest degree. In saying that Shelley's affection for Mrs. Williams was a sentiment, so refined and delicate, so absolutely pure of love's grosser appetency, that her husband's 'genuinely attached friend could without blame both entertain and avow it,' Mr. Rossetti says no more than the truth. But we cannot concur with him in thinking that Shelley could entertain and avow the sentiment without disloyalty to his own wife. It was not in his power to entertain the sentiment for two women at the same time. The sentiment was the ethereal, finer, higher element of the passion he had formerly felt for Mary; of the love he offered her in 1814, in return for the devotion and sacrifices he required from her; of the love, whose vehement avowal had determined her to commit herself to his keeping, in defiance of social rule and censure. Before he could bestow it on Jane Williams, Shelley had to take from Mary the sentimental regard which, to a woman of her sensibility, pride, imaginativeness and sentimentalism, was so far the larger part of the

consideration, as almost to amount to the whole of the consideration, by which he had acquired possession of her. Endowed with youth, beauty, intellectual address, wit, imagination, taste, tact, the liveliest sensibilities, and literary aptitude bordering on genius, Mrs. Shelley was required to descend from the throne of her husband's heart, in order that it should be occupied, now by such an ignoble though lovely animal as Emilia Viviani, and now by a lady, whose mental powers and personal attractions were greatly inferior to her own,—a lady whose want of literary culture he lamented; whose highest accomplishment was a faculty of singing simple airs to her guitar. To suggest that Mary loved the Italian girl whom she styled her 'cara sorella,' or in the secret chambers of her fervid and sensitive heart, deemed herself aught else than grievously wronged by her husband's devotion to the lady with the guitar, is to display a startling ignorance of the sentimental forces that animate and control high-hearted and finely sympathetic women.

Though the passionate ferocity which distinguished Shelley's earlier writings against priests and creeds, and the tyrannies of custom, waned almost to extinction, under the softening and mellowing influences of time, and of his steadily increasing knowledge of human nature, letters, dated by his hand in the closing months of his existence, show how tenacious he was to the last of his principal conclusions on questions of social philosophy; how even to his final hour he declared against all existing governments as iniquitous and cruel, against marriage as a depraving institution, against Christianity as a pernicious delusion. Though he lived to take larger and sympathetic views of Christ's character and career, the author of the *Essay on Christianity* was no less hostile than the poet of *Queen Mab* and *Laon and Cythna*, to the Christianity of the churches.

On its arrival at Pisa, the intelligence of Allegra's death operated like a signal for dispersion to the members of the Byron-Shelleyan coterie, already disposed to move to other places, by the consequences of the recent affair with the mounted trooper and the soldiers at the barrier. Indeed, Byron was already turning his thoughts to villegiatura at Monte-Nero, and Shelley had despatched the Williamses and Claire to Spezia, to reconnoitre the country, in order to discover an eligible summer residence for his party on the coast of the bay. On

his return from Spezia, Williams saw at a glance that Shelley had trouble at his heart. Appointed to break the calamity to Allegra's mother, Shelley shrunk from the task. Deciding to defer the performance of the painful duty, till Claire should have been withdrawn from the vicinity of the Palazzo Lanfranchi, he prevailed on her to go back to Spezia on the morrow, in the company of his wife and Trelawny. Though he was no doubt guided chiefly by care for her feelings, the course thus taken by Shelley may also have resulted in some degree from an apprehension that, if the dismal tidings were communicated to her at the Tre Palazzi, she might in the first paroxysms of her mental torture escape his control, hasten to the other side of the Lung' Arno, and forcing her way into Byron's presence overwhelm him with reproaches for sending her child to Bagna Cavallo, in contemptuous disregard of her expostulations and predictions of disaster. Anyhow, it was wisely decided that Claire should not make acquaintance with the sharpest grief of her existence till she should be well away from Byron, who, though profoundly disturbed by the loss of his illegitimate daughter, showed no sign of relenting towards his former mistress.

A few days later, the Shelleys, with Claire and the Williamses, were settled in their narrow and comfortless quarters at the Casa Magni (San Terenzo), some three miles from the wretched little town of Sarzana, some four or five minutes (by fast boat) from the equally squalid and picturesque Lerici, and within an hour's sail of Spezia. It would be an exaggeration to say that even in Italy it would be impossible to discover, amidst scenes of incomparable loveliness, a meaner, dirtier, more poverty-stricken, more repulsive sea-side village than San Terenzo; but one keeps well between the lines of severe historic veracity in saying no English tourists, of the means and social quality of the Shelleys and Williamses, ever made their abode (from choice and for pleasure) in a more unclean and ill-favoured Italian village for a considerable period. No words can commend too highly the peculiar and winning beauties of the surrounding scenery; but the village itself is doleful, unclean, and appallingly hideous. The same may be said of the wretched inhabitants of the village, that contains only a single dwelling, in any degree fit for the habitation of gentle people. Now that it boasts an upper storey (built

since Shelley's time) and contains twice as many rooms as it had when it housed the poet and his companions, the Casa Magni is far from an alluring and impressive residence. Sixty years since the massive and unsightly tenement (whilom a Jesuits' convent) contained on its solitary floor over a cavernous basement no more than four habitable rooms—(1) a large dining-hall, (2) the room in which Mrs. Shelley and Claire used to sleep, (3) the bedroom occupied by the Williamses, and (4) Shelley's sleeping apartment; the three bedrooms opening into the grand saloon. In these four rooms five people (*six*, when Claire was of the party) contrived to live in what must have been a superlatively comfortless and 'pigging' fashion; the cooking for the family being done in some out-building, where the servants slept and had their meals. Built so close to the sea, that at high-water the waves tumble noisily about the base of the structure, this marine abode has at its rear neither a single olive-tree, nor the space in which to plant one. The one redeeming feature of this unsatisfactory piece of domestic architecture was (in Shelley's time), and still is, a broad terrace supported by arches of strong masonry, that running along the whole sea-ward front of the edifice, at the level of the floor of the one set of rooms, served the Shelleys in fine weather as a fifth room, when no fierce sun drove its occupants to the backward parts of the house.

The large dining-hall (with the doors of the bed-rooms opening into it) was the grand chamber, through which Shelley passed without a single thread of raiment on his person, to the dismay of his friends of both sexes, when he lost his clothes whilst bathing; it having escaped the poet that, by merely putting his head into the room and summoning Trelawny or Williams to his side, he might have compassed the timely retirement of the ladies, so as to spare their feelings an embarrassing and painful surprise. The large terrace towards the sea was the place, where Shelley delighted to sit for hours together (*vide* Shelley's letter to John Gisborne of 18th of June, 1822) in the summer evenings, listening to the pleasant but comparatively artless music of Jane Williams's voice and guitar.

It is not surprising that Mrs. Shelley entered this comfortless and altogether unsatisfactory place of abode with drooping spirits, and that every week she spent in it heightened her aversion for the place. Suffering from a state of health, that

promised the birth of another child towards the close of the year, she would under the most favourable circumstances have found it difficult to control the irritability, and combat the depressing languor, that always afflicted her at such a time of bodily trouble. Placed at the sea-side, when she was pining for green fields and rural quietude; exposed to the glaring and scorching suns of an unusually hot and dry season, when she thirsted for cool rivulets and murmurous trees; told to make herself at home and take life easily in a house singularly deficient in its arrangements, at the extremity of a barbarous village, where she could not get the food for her frugal table without sending for it to Sarzana or Lerici, she may be pardoned for murmuring at the prospect of passing several months in so distasteful and even exasperating a place. Shelley, on the other hand, was for a while in excellent spirits, and finding San Terenzo altogether to his mind was displeased with his wife for disliking what he enjoyed. He even scolded her for being discontented without a cause. 'No words,' she wrote in August, 1822 (*vide* Forman's edition of *Shelley's Works*) to Mrs. Gisborne, 'can tell you how I hated our house and the country about it. Shelley reproached me for this—his health was good and the place was quite after his own heart.' Whether it was chivalric of Shelley to reproach his sick wife for disliking what he enjoyed, is a question that may be left for his extravagant idolaters. For me it is enough to say, that in this respect he acted as men too often act, when they are unusually well and their wives are annoyingly ill. No doubt it was annoying to him. Charmed with the bay of Spezia, when he made a flying visit to it in the previous summer, he had for months been looking forward to a term of residence amidst its beauties. It was hard for him, that Mary could not keep her ailments and discontent to herself. Knowing how he had been counting on the felicity of living near Lerici, how he and Williams had for months been looking forward to the delight of sailing about the bay, and running to and fro between Leghorn and Lerici in the lovely boat, that was being built for them at Genoa, it was Mary's manifest duty to enjoy what he enjoyed, or at least to pretend that she enjoyed it. No doubt she was in a delicate state of health. But what of that? It is usual for young wives to be so at times.

Brought round from Genoa by Mr. Heslop and two English

seamen, Shelley's new boat entered Lerici harbour on 12th May, 1822, and on trial afforded the liveliest gratification both to the poet and Williams (joint-owners of the craft), the latter of whom wrote of her performance in his diary, 'She fetches whatever she looks at. In short, we have now a perfect plaything for the summer.' The perfect plaything was a fatal toy. Henceforth Shelley and his friend passed most of their time on the water; Mary sometimes accompanying them in their swift passages over the dancing waves. 'My only moments of peace,' she wrote in the middle of August, 1822, to Mrs. Gisborne, 'were on board that unhappy boat when lying down with my head on his knee I shut my eyes and felt the wind and our swift motion alone.' But these moments of peace were of no benefit to her health. Threatened with a miscarriage on the 8th of June, she endured another week of extreme discomfort before she was prostrated by the misadventure, that nearly put an end to her life. It was some alleviation of Mary's misery, that in her illness she had two companions of her own rank and sex,—Jane Williams, the blamelessness of whose behaviour towards Shelley is demonstrated by his wife's affection for her; and Claire, who, after withdrawing from San Terenzo for a few weeks, was by this time again an inmate of the Casa Magni. But from inexperience and want of nerve, Claire and Jane proved such poor nurses at the most alarming and perilous crisis of their patient's trouble, that she would have died of hemorrhage had not Shelley (*vide* his letter of 18th June, 1822, to John Gisborne, and Mrs. Shelley's letter of the following August to Mrs. Gisborne), with an address and boldness for which his brief medical training may have been accountable, made her sit in ice till the blood ceased to flow.

But if he may be commended for saving her life on this occasion, Shelley retarded his wife's restoration by alarming her a few days later by exhibitions of nervous derangement, that was chiefly referable to his apprehensions for her safety. At all times liable at any moment to impulses of fancy, resulting in visions whose vividness, even when they lacked the persistency and steadiness of distinct hallucination, was inconsistent with perfect mental sanity, he had in the previous month, whilst enjoying unusually good health, occasioned the Williamses no little concern by his excitement at a mere illusion, which for some time he mistook for an actual occurrence. On the

evening of 6th May, 1822, whilst pacing the Casa Magni terrace, he stopt suddenly, grasped Edward Williams violently by the arm, and staring stedfastly at the white surf at their feet, gave signs of acute mental torture. In reply to a question from Williams, he exclaimed excitedly, 'There it is again—there!' The cause of his disturbance was his vivid imagination that little Allegra, naked and lovely, rose out of the surf to his view, clapt her hands in joy, and smiled at him. So powerfully was Shelley affected by this apparition of the child, for whom he had provided by his will no less liberally than he provided for his own children, that his friends found it difficult to induce him to regard it as a mere illusion of his fancy. In the excitement coming to him from his wife's illness, Shelley (to use her words) underwent 'a return of nervous sensations and visions as bad as in his worst times;' one of these visitations being a singularly hideous attack of nightmare, attended with a repulsive dream that affected him both at the moment and for some time afterwards, as though it were a real adventure. During the night of Saturday, 22nd June, 1822, Mrs. Shelley was roused from her sleep by a scream. Almost at the same moment Shelley (whose sleeping-room was on the other side of the great dining-hall) rushed into her room, screaming frantically. Under the impression that he was asleep, she tried to waken him by calling loudly to him; but instead of replying to her cries, he continued to scream so violently and alarmingly, that she sprang from her bed in a panic, and hastening from her bedroom ran across the dining-hall into the Williamses' sleeping chamber, where, in her weakness and fright, she fell to the ground. As Shelley, on being restored to his senses and soothed into something like equanimity, declared he had not screamed, his companions came to the conclusion that he was unconscious during the whole course of his violent emotion;—that in his alarm at a dream he had crossed the hall and burst into his wife's room in his sleep. The dream's first vision was that Edward and Jane Williams (with their bodies lacerated and their bones starting through the skin) approached with these words, 'Get up, Shelley, the sea is flooding the house and it is all coming down;' words that caused Shelley to imagine he went to his window and saw the sea rushing into the house. The dream's second vision was that he saw himself in the act of strangling his own

wife. In the morning, whilst talking with Mary about the last night's disturbance, he told her 'that he had had many visions lately.' One of these recent visions (a vision, that is described in two or three different ways by the poet's biographers) was that a cloaked figure approached his bedside and beckoned him out of the bedroom into the dining-hall, when, lifting the hood of his cloak, the ghostly visitant, after displaying Shelley's own features to the agitated dreamer, inquired in Spanish 'Art thou satisfied?' and vanished. On being thus confronted and tormented by his own wraith, Shelley screamed loud enough to rouse the house, even as he did on the subsequent occasion when he saw his own wraith in the act of strangling his own wife. The appearance and reappearance of his own wraith were distinctly referable to a scene of one of Calderon's dramas, that had stirred his imagination profoundly and with morbid consequences.

The nervous excitement, that came to Shelley from his wife's recent illness and consequent debility, was heightened by the knowledge that the beloved Hunts were at Genoa, and by the expectation of hearing at any moment of their arrival at Leghorn. On 19th June, 1822, on the third day from Mary's imminent danger, he wrote Hunt a letter, in the hope that it would reach him at the former port; a letter in which the writer promised to set sail for Leghorn on hearing his friend had left Genoa. For the fulfilment of this promise, Shelley, on Monday, 1st July, 1822, departed from Lerici for Leghorn, in the company of Captain Roberts, the builder of the boat which had been christened the 'Don Juan' in compliment to Byron, and with Edward Williams by his side. It was with no common emotion that Mary parted with him. Twice, if not thrice, he was on the point of leaving her, when the poor lady,—who loved him passionately in spite of their frequent bickerings, and who was possessed by vague previsions of some approaching calamity,—called him back to her arms, to put yet another kiss on his slight and sunburnt face, to win yet another smile from his mobile features, to look once again into his forward-set stag-eyes of deepest azure, to rest her eyes once again on his flowing tresses, whose glossy brownness was darkened rather than whitened or tarnished by their few threads of grey,—to repeat the often uttered declaration that, if he did not come back to her quickly, she would speedily return with their child to

their rooms (still on their hands) at the Tre Palazzi, on the Pisan Lung' Arno. 'They went,' she wrote with the awful pathos of sacred sorrow in the following month, 'and Jane, Claire, and I remained alone with the children.' Well, might she weep! For never more was she to press her lips against the slight sun-burnt visage, see herself in those deep-blue eyes, pass her hand over the flowing brown curls, hear the voice which, harsh though it might be to others,—shrill, sharp, strident under impulses of anger, as she knew it to be,—was life's and love's own music to her ear and heart. The sense of coming trouble covered and held her. Not that she feared for *him*. The apprehension of seeing and hearing him no more never troubled her, nor occurred to her for a single instant. Her fear was that in his absence she might lose their child;—that death would enter the Casa Magni, and bear away the darling boy Percy, even as the ruthless foe of human happiness had with his finger's point touched her bright, warm boy Willie into cold, unfeeling clay.

Disaster was far from Shelley's thoughts as his little schooner—his perfect plaything for the summer—cut and danced over the waves on its way to Leghorn, where he would embrace Hunt and Marianne, and kiss their children. From the beginning of the year, his health (never so weakly as he persuaded himself and his friends into thinking it) had been steadily improving. His breast had grown broader, his figure more robust, his limbs less lathy. If it still wanted massiveness, his countenance had relinquished its former slowness and look of almost girlish fragility. Exposure to sea-air and scorching suns had tanned and bronzed the cheeks, that were never wanting in ruddiness. Of late he had allowed his moustaches to grow, and though they were poor, downy, boyish things in Trelawny's opinion, they gave his aspect a certain degree of manliness which his face had lacked, on the occasion of his introduction to the stalwart Cornishman. Now that he had dismissed dull care and nervous fancies, in the elation of the brief voyage that would bring him to Hunt's presence, he had the appearance of a man who might enjoy life for many a year, and live 'to make old bones.' And, indeed, nothing in the ailments, which he magnified, or in the constitution, which he underrated, forbade the hope that he would maintain his family's reputation for longevity. Without being altogether

imaginary, his most serious maladies—dyspepsia and a certain amount of renal trouble—were no infirmities to preclude a confident opinion that, in the absence of fatal misadventure, he might survive to green old age. In truth, though so much has been written of his physical delicacy and constant sufferings from serious malady, there was no reason why, with wholesome diet and freedom from excessive mental trouble, Shelley should not have lived to his grandfather's age. Occasionally, no doubt, he suffered from renal stone, the painful malady that so often attends dyspepsia; but with proper treatment and care for his food he might in a few years have outgrown his disposition to the disorder, which, though afflicting, is by no means necessarily fatal. In deeming himself a sufferer from the malady, which killed the Third Napoleon, he may not have been the mere victim of nervous fancy; but even in that case the operation for his relief would not necessarily have resulted in his death, as he seems to have imagined, whilst penning the well-known lines of *The Magnetic Lady to her Patient* (1822):—

‘What would cure, that would kill me, Jane:
And as I must on earth abide
Awhile, yet tempt me not to break
My chain.’

Anyhow, he never seemed in better health, nor was in higher spirits, than when he sprang from his little schooner at Leghorn, and, throwing himself into Leigh Hunt's embrace, declared himself ‘inexpressibly delighted,’ and ‘inexpressibly happy.’ For the moment Hunt also (though he had landed with his numerous family at Leghorn, with just sixty crowns less than nothing in hand) was unutterably delighted and happy on seeing the pleasant and cordial face of the friend, on whom he would have preyed steadily and largely, had not fate stepped between them. For the next few days Shelley was busy with the affairs of his *protégé*, who had come out from England to fix himself on Byron, though knowing well that the author would fain have been liberated from his engagement to start the *Liberal*. One of Lady Shelley's most notable departures from biographical fairness (to use no stronger word) appears on p. 195 of *Shelley Memorials*, where she speaks of Byron's reluctance in July, 1822, to embark in the *Liberal*, as though it were a sudden change of purpose that, taking Shelley by

surprise at so late a stage of the preliminary arrangements, would have justified him in breaking at once and for ever with the vacillating poet. For months Shelley had been aware of Byron's regret at having committed himself to the hazardous enterprise. No doubt (as I have already remarked) the project was Byron's own design. Though in proposing to take Hunt for his literary coadjutor he was actuated in some degree by benevolent concern for a struggling man of letters, Byron must, of course, be regarded as having been actuated in a higher degree by a selfish concern for his own interests. His subsequent assertion that he was wholly animated in the choice, and even in the project, by benevolence, was a miserable misrepresentation. It cannot be gainsaid that Byron promised to start the *Liberal* and to take Hunt for one of his partners in the enterprise. It is also indisputable that, when a man gives his word, he should keep it. All these matters being admitted, it remains, however, that Byron's engagement was one from which he should have been liberated by both Shelley and Hunt, as soon as he showed a wish to be released from it.

The arrangement of three poets, three men, three gentlemen, for co-operation in a literary enterprise, differs from an arrangement of three tradesmen for a purely commercial undertaking. The project for starting the *Liberal* was a project from which each of the three adventurers could honourably retire, on giving the others timely notice of his purpose to do so. That Byron's first intimation of a wish to retreat from the affair was given long before Hunt left England is indisputable. On receiving it both Hunt and Shelley should have disclaimed the disposition to cause him any embarrassment. In honour they were the more bound to do so,—because he was so much the strongest of the three in fame and purse; because in case of success the venture promised to be so much more beneficial to themselves than to him; and because they could not press him to persist in the enterprise against his will, without showing too lively a regard for their own interests. In taking the other course, and conspiring to hold Byron to the arrangement for their own ends, Hunt (for his own advantage) and Shelley (for Hunt's profit) were guilty at least of sharp practice. From February to the end of June, they had been acting together confidentially against their powerful friend. For months they had known of Byron's wish to get out of the affair. At the

beginning of July, just four calendar months had passed since Shelley wrote from Pisa to his fellow-conspirator in England (2nd March, 1822),—‘I imagine it will be no very difficult task to execute that which you have assigned me—to keep him in heart with the project until your arrival.’ Yet in her book *Lady Shelley*, speaking of the affair as it stood on 1st July, 1822, says,—

‘Byron had *by this time* been persuaded by Thomas Moore, and some of his other friends in London, that the projected magazine, about which he had been very anxious at first, would be injurious to his fame and interests; and Shelley *now*’ (‘by this time’ and ‘now,’ as though Byron now for the first time showed his distaste for the project, in which he was constrained to embark by the two confederates)—‘found him so desirous of making any possible retreat from his engagements, that, had he not feared he might damage his friend’s interests, he would have quarrelled outright with the noble poet. He was very much out of spirits when he left; and that was the last interview they ever had.’

In saying that Shelley parted in dejection from Byron, Lady Shelley is scarcely in accord with the best authorities touching the result of his action in Hunt’s behalf. Hopeful that Hunt and Byron would work together harmoniously for any considerable term, he could not well be, and certainly was not. But Mrs. Shelley’s words may be taken as conclusive evidence, that her husband was pleased with the immediate consequence of his mediation between the poet, who would fain have shipt the Hunts back to England, and the poet who had come to Italy with the purpose of planting himself on Byron. Speaking of her husband’s exertions to put the two partners at least in transient accord, Mrs. Shelley, in her August letter to Mrs. Gisborne, says :—

‘Shelley had past most of the time at Pisa—arranging the affairs of the Hunts—and skrewing L. B.’s mind to the sticking place about the journal. He had found this a difficult task at first, but at length he had succeeded to his heart’s content with both points. Mrs. Mason said that she saw him in better health and spirits than she had ever known him, when he took leave of her on Sunday, July 7th, his face burnt by the sun and his heart light that he had succeeded in rendering the Hunts tolerably comfortable.’

This would of itself dispose of Lady Shelley’s assertion that Shelley retired in depression from his final negotiations of Byron. On Thursday, 4th July, Shelley had written of the

Hunts and of Byron's obligation to take them at least for a brief while altogether on his hands, 'Lord Byron must of course furnish the requisite funds at present, as I cannot ; but he seems inclined to depart without the necessary explanations and arrangements due to such a situation as Hunt's. These, in spite of delicacy, I must procure.' Three days later (Sunday, 7th August) he is in high spirits at having brought Byron into better humour with the Hunts, and made the Hunts fairly comfortable. With Byron he has 'succeeded' to his heart's content ; and in respect to the Hunts he is positively 'light-hearted.' Confirmed by several contemporary writings, Mrs. Shelley's testimony respecting her husband's satisfaction with and consequent elation at his arrangements for the Hunts, represents the view of Captain Roberts, Trelawny, Lady Mountcashel, the Hunts themselves, indeed of everyone of Shelley's friends, who saw him in the last days of his existence at Pisa or Leghorn. The unquestionable success of his negotiations with Byron cannot have failed to gratify him. Yet Lady Shelley requires us to believe that he retired from those negotiations 'very much out of spirits.'

On finding in July how he had been kept in ignorance of Hunt's retirement from the *Examiner*, Byron might reasonably and honourably have used the concealment as a sufficient reason for breaking at once with the crafty practitioner. He had invited Hunt, as the Editor of the *Examiner*, to co-operate with him ; he had furnished rooms in his house for the Hunts, on the understanding that Leigh Hunt had at least a sufficient income for the payment of his weekly bills ; and now, through Hunt's wary concealment of the real state of his affairs, he found himself with a numerous and absolutely destitute family in his house,—found himself, also, required by Shelley to take the maintenance of this penniless family altogether on his own hands—at least for a time. Byron had reason for resentment on finding himself over-reached and imposed upon in this unscrupulous and impudent manner. But what could he do ? Mrs. Hunt was alarmingly ill, her children were guiltless of wilful complicity in the father's extortionate manœuvre. He could not turn the sick woman and her babes out-of-doors. He could not even turn the wily operator on the pockets of his acquaintances out-of-doors. The clever, dextrous, irresistibly charming fellow had not a crown in his purse. For the moment

Shelley could not relieve the necessities of the family, whom he had brought out from England and thrown upon Byron's hands in so comical a manner. Shelley stated the situation precisely to his wife on the 4th of July, when he wrote, 'Lord Byron must of course furnish the requisite funds at present, as I cannot.' One must needs smile at the thought of the three prime actors in the droll affair :—at the thrifty Byron's dismay on being suddenly called upon to provide board and pocket-money, as well as bed and house-room, for the impecunious family ; at the free-handed Shelley's clear perception of Byron's duty to these equally charming and shiftless Micawbers ; at Hunt's chagrin at the coldness with which he was welcomed to the Palazzo Lanfranchi. It is to Byron's credit that he did all that honour and humanity required of him under the circumstances ; and at the same time to his discredit that he did it ungraciously. Finding he 'was in for it,' without any easy and congenial way of escape, he started the *Liberal* ; carried the Hunts in his train to Genoa ; and, without causing Leigh Hunt more misery than he deserved, did divers things he should for his own dignity's sake have left undone. It is not surprising that, after dropping a good deal of money and credit on the *Liberal* in a faint-hearted way, he declined to sacrifice himself yet further, for the advantage of his unsatisfactory partner.

After spending seven days between Leghorn and Pisa, Shelley set sail for Lerici in his little schooner with Edward Williams, who was longing to get back to his wife at the Casa Magni, and Charles Vivian, the young sailor who was the only regular nautical 'hand' on board the swift but unsteady craft. Contradicting one another even to the latest point of Shelley's career, the authorities are at variance respecting the frame of mind in which he started on his brief voyage to death. On the one hand it is declared that he left Leghorn in dejection, and on the other that he went out of port in the highest elation. On seeking information from those who bade him farewell as he stepped into his boat, Mrs. Shelley was assured that he went off 'in one of those extravagant fits of good spirits in which' he was 'sometimes seen.' The truth seems to be that, though dispirited for a few minutes by a despondent letter from Mary, he speedily recovered the jubilant air that had distinguished him on the previous day at Pisa, and in his satisfaction at the latest arrangements for the journey started in the happiest temper. He did

not, however, glide out of the harbour without forewarning of the gale that was rising for his destruction. The day had been intensely hot, and a violent thunderstorm had broken over the gulf in the forenoon. Captain Roberts had even hinted that the voyagers should wait for more settled weather on the morrow:—an ominous hint from the ‘Don Juan’s’ builder. But though Shelley was faintly disposed to take the captain’s advice, Edward Williams, in his eagerness for his wife’s society, would hear of no delay, insisting with the wind then blowing they should be home in seven hours. Even as the ‘Don Juan’ slipped out of the harbour the Genoese mate of Byron’s yacht, ‘Bolivar,’ remarked to his captain, Trelawny, in reference to the dark clouds, rolling up from the south-west in threatening masses, that ‘the devil was brewing mischief.’ Three hours later the devil of this nautical prediction had for a brief while his own way with the gulf. It was about three p.m. when the small schooner scudded away from the Leghorn mole, from whose extremity Captain Roberts watched her performance till she passed beyond the range of his unaided vision at the rate of some seven knots an hour. At 6.30 Trelawny, who had gone to his cabin on board the ‘Bolivar,’ was roused from his afternoon’s slumber by noises, familiar to his nautical ear. Going on board he found the sky darkened by fog to almost nocturnal gloom, and learnt from the disturbances of the air and the commotion of the shipping in the harbour, that a mighty storm was on the point of breaking over the sea. A few minutes later the din and hubbub and shrill pipings of countless mariners were silenced by the thunder and wind and rattling rain of a wild and overpowering squall. The storm spent its fiercest fury in twenty minutes,—the brief passage of time during which the ‘Don Juan,’ that perfect plaything for the summer, foundered and sunk beneath the tumult of the angry billows.

Knowing from the force of the rising wind, even before she had passed from his view whilst he stood at the mole’s end, that the ‘Don Juan’ was in for a stiff breeze and hard weather, Captain Roberts went from the mole to the authorities, who could give him leave to ascend the lighthouse tower. On getting their permission to do so he climbed the Leghorn lighthouse, from whose summit he succeeded in sighting the toy-schooner with a glass, when she was some ten miles out at sea, off Via Reggio. The vessel was in view long enough for the

captain to observe that her crew were in the act of taking in the top-sails. But it was only a glimpse he got of the boat before the sea-fog stole it from his sight. The circuit of the sea, covered by the captain's glass, was alive with shipping, driven wildly by the mighty tempest; but when the sky and view cleared, though the gazer from the lighthouse saw again every other vessel he had held in sight before the transient obscuration, he looked in vain for the one vessel, in which he was personally interested.

On her recovery from a depth of from ten to fifteen fathoms of water in the following September, it was discovered that the 'Don Juan' had not capsized. She had gone under, swamped by an overwhelming sea or overborne by a felucca that ran her down. The large hole in her stern, and other signs of violence countenancing the latter conjecture, gave rise to the suspicion that she had been struck by a felucca in a piratical attempt to seize her, in the hope of getting possession of the dollars she was supposed to have on board. At this distance of time there is no need to examine the unsatisfactory evidence that favours this hideous hypothesis. That the 'Don Juan' was followed from Leghorn Harbour by pirates, set on making prize of the money she was believed to carry, is not unlikely. She may have been chased and even run down by pirates, set on plundering her in the open sea; but even in that case it is more probable that the immediate cause of her submergence was accidental collision, than that her piratical pursuers selected a moment for striking so slight a vessel, when the violence of the storm and the tumult of the waters rendered it impossible for them to board her. But at this date it matters little why and how she foundered.

It is more interesting to know that, sudden as it was, the catastrophe might have come more suddenly:—that the poet and his comrades had at least a brief minute or two, in which to prepare for the fate that did not overtake them altogether unawares. That they were taking in their topsails off Via Reggio is a sufficient indication that they were alive to the peril of their position before they passed from Captain Roberts's view. That on its recovery Edward Williams's corpse was found almost without clothing shows that before the little schooner went down he had time to realize the imminence of the danger, and to prepare for an attempt to save himself by swimming. On the other hand, the submerged boat and the remains of the three drowned

bodies were found too near the point, at which Captain Roberts sighted and lost sight of them, for any difference of opinion respecting the hour or even the approximate minute of the catastrophe. At the most, they had only a few minutes to live when they busied themselves in hauling in their top-sails. A minute or two after passing from the view of the watcher on the lighthouse they were themselves face to face with death. In September, 1822, the vessel was discovered off Via Reggio; and on the 22nd of the previous July, just a fortnight after the fatal storm, the remains of Shelley's corpse, and the remains of Edward Williams's body, were found on shore,—those of Shelley being found near Via Reggio, on the Tuscan coast, whilst all that remained of Edward Williams's manly form and presence had been carried to a point, some three miles distant, at the Bocca Lericcio, hard by the Migliarino tower. Three weeks later Charles Vivian's skeleton was brought to shore by the waves, at a distance of some four miles from the spot to which Edward Williams's corpse had been carried.

How Shelley and Williams acted, as the schooner was already sinking beneath them, one may infer confidently from the characters and mutual affection of the two men; from the notable difference in respect to the clothing of what was recovered of their disfigured bodies; and from what we know of Shelley's demeanour on previous occasions (notably and especially on the occasion of the squall off St. Gingoux in the summer of 1816), when he was in danger of death from drowning. It cannot be doubted that, whilst hastily stripping himself of his raiment, Williams proposed to do his best to save his friend as well as himself. To this proposal it is certain that the poet (who on the former occasion had firmly refused the help of so expert a swimmer as Byron) answered calmly that he was ready for death, was even glad to embrace the fate so mercifully offered to him; and that, after so refusing to diminish his comrade's chance of escape, and after enjoining him to bear his love to Mary and Jane and Claire at the Casa Magni, he anticipated without dismay or vain regret, on the contrary, welcomed with mingled complacence and curiosity, the moment when he should pass through the veil that divides the here from the hereafter,—the moment that would give him the knowledge for which he had so long hungered and thirsted.

Possibly in that last minute or two, his mind was visited

momentarily by tender and subduing thoughts of old joys and interests, former sorrows and ambitions, exhausted enmities and profitless contentions, disappointed hopes and unachieved aspirations. I conceive that thoughts of the old home and parents, from whose love he had severed himself, of Eton and poor old Keate, of Oxford and Hogg, of scenes about Keswick and Killarney, together with thoughts of more recent friends and less distant places, flitted across his brain, ever so quick and imaginative, now so abnormally active, and in a trice to be still for ever. Doubtless he thought of his little boy at San Terenzo, his other boy whom he had buried at Rome; possibly also of his children in England, and of the lovely girl who had given birth to them,—the sweet, bright, radiant girl who died in the water of the cold Serpentine, even as he would now die in the water of the angry sea. As he sate calmly on the sinking boat, and studied the successive visions of his own life's panorama, he may be conceived to have remembered things he had done, and things he had left undone, to his regret. In his doubt and curiosity he may also be conceived to have hoped that, should death prove the gateway to another life for him, it would be a life, in which the ways of duty and righteousness are more clearly marked and more easily discovered, than the ways of righteousness and duty in this darksome, and troublous, and perplexing existence. Thus, as he sate a-thinking in the foundering boat, Shelley sunk beneath the turbulent and cruel waves, so remorseless for the woe they work, so heedless of the lives they devour.

To tell all that needs yet to be told requires few words. All the world knows how Shelley's torn, and wasted, and disfigured corpse was reduced to ashes, and a few fragments of bone (with the exception of the heart that would *not* be burnt) on the pyre, that was piled and lit for its cremation, on the sands of the seashore, to which the relenting waves carried him all too late. Again and again it has been told how, under the fierce light of a southern sky and sun, at the marge of the whispering sea, and within view of the remote Apennines, this revival of a classic rite was performed with precise care for classic requirements, in the presence of Byron, Trelawny, Leigh Hunt, and a guard of soldiers. Who needs to be told again, how the copy of Keats's last book (found in Shelley's pocket, doubled back at the *Eve of St. Agnes*, as though he had been perusing it, till

death's summons made him put it aside hurriedly) was thrown upon the blazing pyre? What reader of Mr. Rossetti's description of the burning of the great poet's body has not heard the cries of the curlew, that wheeling close about the pyre, and screaming miserably, refused to be driven away? It is the story of every household, where poetry is prized and genius is honoured, that Shelley's ashes were conveyed to Rome, and there deposited in the new Protestant Cemetery (*not* the *old* burial-ground, that holds the dust of Keats and Mary Godwin's first-born son), at a spot planted by Trelawny, with laurels and cypresses, and marked by the stone of this record :—

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Cor Cordium

Natus iv Aug. MDCCXCII

Obiit viii Jul. MDCCCXXII

Nothing of him that doth fade
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.

CHAPTER XVII.

SHELLEY'S WIDOW AND HER SISTER-BY-AFFINITY.

The Widow in Italy—Her Return to England—Sojourn in the Strand—Life at Kentish Town—Residence at Harrow—She is forbidden to write her Husband's 'Life'—'Moonshine' and 'Celestial Mate'—Her closing Years—Claire in her later Time—Trelawny's inaccurate Talk about Shelley's Will—Claire's double Legacy—She becomes a Catholic—Dies in the Catholic Faith.

AT the close of this attempt to exhibit the Real Shelley, so unlike the Shelley of biographical romance, a few more words should be said of William Godwin's daughter and of Claire.

On her husband's death, Mrs. Shelley was in a pitiable condition. In Italy she had no friends, able and at the same time willing to render her effectual help. The Gisbornes were poor; the Hunts, in losing Shelley, had lost their surest means of subsistence in the foreign land; for several years Claire would have enough to do, to shift for herself; Mrs. Williams was not provided for bountifully; and, apart from them, the poet's widow knew in Italy scarcely any one whom she could regard as aught more than a mere acquaintance. Trelawny, who (without liking her) befriended her nobly in the crisis of her troubles, she had known for little more than half-a-year. For months her husband's and her own relations with Byron had been strained almost to rupture. Though he recognized her cleverness, and was not insensible to her beauty, Byron had never delighted in her greatly; and now that Shelley was gone, he had lost his strongest reason for trying to regard her cordially. Fretted by the Hunts, he was on uneasy terms with the woman, who was too closely associated with them, for him not to think of her position as part of the embarrassment arising out of the *Liberal*. Knowing they had her affection, he was, of course, aware that she gave them her sympathy, and thought he treated them badly. Still he rendered her the civilities to which she was entitled at his hands; and whilst consulting him on her affairs, she confided to him the delicate and difficult task of addressing Sir Timothy Shelley in her behalf.

Whilst the widow's position in Italy was depressing, her prospect in England was cheerless. Eight years older and poorer than he was on the July morning that saw her flit from his roof, her father could only give her sympathy, invite her to a smaller home, and assure her that, should she be placed in sudden and urgent need of money, he would do his best to send her a small sum. At Field Place she was known only by name, and by circumstances that were necessarily regarded there as circumstances to her discredit. To use Lady Shelley's expression, the young widow (still only four-and-twenty years of age) was 'coldly regarded by her husband's family.' It would have been strange had the family regarded her affectionately. The persons of all the world, with the exception of her own kindred, who had suffered most from her career, are scarcely to be censured for thinking of her with disapproval. What title had she to the affection of her husband's father, mother, sisters? She had no doubt a son, who was Sir Timothy Shelley's grandson? But in 1822 this little boy was not heir-apparent to the Castle Goring baronetcy, Shelley's son (Charles Bysshe) being the heir-apparent; and it was not till Charles's death, in 1826, that William Godwin's daughter could say, 'If my boy survives his grandfather, he will be Sir Percy Florence Shelley.' It is not surprising that, whilst recognizing Percy's claim to his grand-paternal consideration, Sir Timothy could not see what title the little fellow's mother had to his paternal care. In reply to Byron's letter, it seemed enough to Sir Timothy Shelley, that he should offer to take charge of Mary's boy, should she consent to surrender the little fellow unreservedly to his custody and government—a proposal which, stirring William Godwin to indignation, was, of course, declined with disdainful firmness by his daughter.

Returning with her child to England in the autumn of 1823, Mrs. Shelley lived under her father's roof in the Strand, till she moved into the small house in Kentish Town, from whose window she and Mrs. Williams saw Byron's hearse pass slowly on its way from London to Nottinghamshire. Some ten years later (1833) she moved to Harrow, where she remained during the period of her boy's education at the famous school. For some time after her return to England, she and her child lived on the earnings of her pen; but at a later time she received from her father-in-law the allowance, which, towards the end

of 1838, he threatened to stop, if she ventured to write and publish her husband's life. By her friends Sir Timothy Shelley was declared guilty of revolting inhumanity in denying her the solace she would have derived from producing a worthy record of her husband's virtues. But in forbidding her to write a book, that could scarcely have failed to pain him acutely and torture even more sharply the feelings of his children, Sir Timothy cannot be fairly charged with exceeding the powers pertaining to him as the chief of his family. There are also reasons why every judicious admirer of Shelley's genius, and all sober worshipers of his memory, should be thankful for the menace that determined Mrs. Shelley to relinquish the work which she began in the vein of fantastic egotism, that caused her to proclaim herself 'the chosen mate of a celestial spirit' whom she hoped 'to join in his native sky,' and to speak of herself as 'moonshine' destined to 'be united to her planet and wander no more, a sad reflection of all she loved on earth.'

The marvellous piece of egotism on the highest of romantic stilts, from which these scraps are taken, appears at large in the preface to Hogg's *Life*, where it is followed by the letter (dated 41 Park Street, Dec. 11, 1838, from Moonshine to her Celestial Spirit's future biographer) containing these words: 'Sir Timothy forbids Biography, under a threat of stopping the supplies.' Certainly the present generation has no reason to regret Sir Timothy's menace and its consequence. A biography, written in a vein of such affectation, could not have redounded to the poet's honour. Nor would it have been in any way creditable to Moonshine, who, without ever fulfilling the promise of her first work of fiction, was in her sober and unaffected moods an equally industrious and capable woman of letters. The examples given in previous pages of her ways of dealing with matters of her own, her father's, and her husband's history, warrant a confident opinion, that, had she been allowed to go her own way by the stern Sir Timothy, Mrs. Shelley's biography of the poet would not have been commendable for severe accuracy.

Of Mrs. Shelley's way of living, from the date of her husband's to the moment of her own death, no biographer will venture to speak disrespectfully, apart from such slight reprehension as may be fairly awarded to her exhibitions of animosity and vindictiveness against her stepmother and her

stepmother's daughter. Trelawny, who thought her a fretful, trying, jealous wife at Pisa, found fault with her in subsequent years for her nervous sensitiveness of social opinion, and excessive care for the conventional proprieties. Instead of blaming her for the pains she took in her later time to stand well with the world, most readers of this page will probably concur in thinking it to her credit, that she expressed in so natural and appropriate a manner her regret for the indiscretions of her girlhood. A good daughter to her old father in his declining years, an affectionate friend, and a faultless mother, Mary Wollstonecraft's child had at least a fair share of the womanly virtues, though she was not the phenomenally noble creature people have been required to think her. Surviving her father by about fourteen years and ten months, she died in February, 1851, nearly seven years after her son's succession to the Castle Goring baronetcy. For the one great error of her life, the error of her girlhood, she rendered ample atonement; and had it not been for the extravagances of her eulogists, her other failings would by this time have passed from human interest and recollection.

How about Mary's sister-by-affinity? Reference has been made in a previous chapter to the liberality with which Shelley, by his will, provided for the charming and vivacious Claire, in whose brilliant endowments he delighted, whilst pitying her for her misfortunes. Trelawny seems to have been one of those who thought that Claire gained twice as much by the poet's testament as he meant to bequeath her. 'Trelawny,' says Mr. Rossetti, in his equally valuable and entertaining *Talks with Trelawny*, contributed to the *Athenæum* in 1882, 'says that Shelley left Miss Clairmont, by will, no less a sum than 12,000*l.* He had left 6000*l.* in the body of the will, and then (whether by inadvertence or otherwise) he bequeathed another 6000*l.* in a codicil. Miss Clairmont, however, did not manage the money prudently—one unfortunate speculation being the purchase of a box or boxes in Lumley's Italian Opera-house, now burned down. She is still in Florence, Via Valfonda. I asked Trelawny whether he thought I might call on her if I am at Florence this year; but he considers she would not be pleased at my doing so. He and I continued talking about Shelley's will, which he says was regarded as a remarkable document in a legal sense.' In a previous chapter it was remarked how little Trelawny knew

about the will, of which he spoke so freely and confidently to Mr. Rossetti:—a will drawn by a lawyer, to which no codicil is attached. Trelawny was, however, right in saying that Claire was neither prudent nor fortunate in her investments. Mrs. Shelley may well have disapproved of her husband's great, and even excessive, testamentary munificence to her sister-by-affinity; though she was wrong in thinking that the entire bequest exceeded the testator's purpose, at the date of the will. Of course Claire did not come into the legacy till the settlement of the poet's affairs after his father's death, which took place in 1844. Since 29th April, 1873, the date of Mr. Rossetti's talk with Trelawny about the poet's will, Claire passed from this world to the majority of the actors of the Byronic-Shelleyan drama. In the time when she used to flash about London after coming into her money, Claire was on friendly terms with more than one of the present writer's acquaintance. Surviving most of those, who knew her in the days of her girlish waywardness and brightest womanly loveliness, she became a devout member of the Catholic Church ('a somewhat bigotted Roman Catholic,' in Trelawny's opinion), and did not close her old age, without having suffered from straitened circumstances and much painful illness. Possibly affection for her lost child may have been an influence, disposing her to seek spiritual solace from the Church, in whose arms they both died. Anyhow it gives another pathetic touch to her story that Claire lived to embrace the faith, from which she did her utmost to preserve her little Allegra.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LAST WORDS.

A Schedule of significant Matters—Delusion and Semi-Delusion—Certain phenomenal Peculiarities of Shelley's Mind—The Psychological Problem—The Story that would have opened Southey's Eyes—How it would be Received by Critical Persons—Misconceptions of Field Place—Bootlessness of publishing the Story—Shelley and Socialistic Literature—Marian Evans's Great Error—Her Marriage—Mischievous Effects of the Apologies for Shelleyan Socialism—The Homage to which Shelley is entitled—The Homage to which he has no Title.

IN this concluding chapter of my exhibition of the evidences respecting Shelley's character and career, it will be well for readers to review, judicially, some of his many statements that, whether they are referable to falsehood, delusion, or 'semi-delusion,' were one and all untrue statements, in that they were statements contrary to fact, together with a few other matters which should dispose readers to accept his representations with suspicion and extreme caution.

(1) In or about 1800, little Bysshe Shelley entertained his sisters with an imaginary account of the visit he represented himself as having paid to the ladies (with a delightful garden), whom he had not visited; an incident of the poet's childhood which, showing he resembled many other children in a particular kind of imaginativeness, points to his constitutional propensity, from an early age, to mistake the impressions of fancy for veritable cognition.

(2) In or about 1804, the Shelley of Sion House, Brentford, gave in to Dr. Greenlaw the two lines from Ovid as verses of his own composition; an incident showing that, instead of being so remarkably truthful in his infancy, as eulogistic biographers have declared him, he was, in his childhood, capable of the petty falsehoods and acts of deceit, of which children are often guilty.

(3) In or about the same year (1804), whilst a pupil at Sion House, Shelley volunteered to do his schoolmate's (Gellibrand's) Latin exercise for him; and, instead of keeping his word and doing it in a way to satisfy their master, deliberately did it in

a way that could not fail to bring his friend Gellibrand to punishment; an incident showing that, instead of being the generous and loyal child his idolaters delight in imagining him, he was, in his childhood, capable of the little acts of treachery of which children are sometimes guilty. Whilst smiling at the incident and its consequences, the reader must admit that in this matter the child-Shelley broke his word of honour to his comrade.

(4) At Eton, whilst living under the influence of the virtuous Dr. Lind, Shelley became an habitual fabricator of mendacious letters, each of the epistles being made up of false statements, for which the power and activity of his imagination can in no degree be held accountable. The suggestion is not to be entertained that, when luring an ignorant correspondent into displaying his ignorance for the sake of the pleasure of laughing at him, Shelley sincerely imagined himself a genuine searcher after truth; seeking an enlargement of his knowledge from the person he addressed. When he signed himself 'John Jones,' Shelley cannot have imagined it was his real name. When he gave a false address for the purpose of concealment, Shelley cannot have imagined it was a real address.

(5) Whilst he was an Etonian, Shelley had, at Field Place, the illness attended with delirium, in which he appears to have been first visited with the monstrous and revolting notion that his father designed to lock him up in a madhouse. Long after this illness, he either suffered from this hallucination, or, with deliberate untruthfulness, slandered his father in declaring him to have entertained so monstrous a purpose. He told this story to his father's infamy to Hogg at Oxford, to Peacock in later time, and various other persons. He used this story to compass his own selfish ends. It comes to us from Mary Godwin's pen, that he used this story to stir her compassion for him when he was endeavouring to lure her to live in Free Contract with him, and that he used it to good purpose. Peacock, who knew him well, maintains that Shelley was haunted throughout life by this notion of his father's enormous wickedness and revolting design to lock him up in a madhouse. Yet the evidence is certain that the kindly Squire of Field Place never entertained any such design against the boy, whose consent would be needful on his coming of age to the resettlement of the family estates

A and B. It is certain that in this matter Shelley slandered his own father throughout successive years, and to various persons, his various utterances and re-utterances of the monstrous slander being one and all referable to deliberate falsehood, delusion, or what Peacock styles semi-delusion.

(6) In the year 1810, Shelley induced a London publisher to publish a collection of verses on the assurance that they were original poetry, and to offer the verses under a title proclaiming their originality, though he cannot have been unaware they were deficient in the alleged originality. Writing from memory, more than sixteen years after the event, the rascally and mendacious Stockdale declared that, on the discovery of the plagiarism, Shelley laid the blame of the fraud on his coadjutor. As Shelley's coadjutor was his own sister, to believe Stockdale's unsupported assertion is to take an even more unfavourable view of Shelley's part in the affair.

(7) In the Christmas holidays of 1810-11, Shelley wrote from Field Place to Hogg at Oxford, that he meant to have recourse to deception to members of his own domestic circle, and having declared this intention, he told untruths to the persons he meant to deceive. For these untruths the power and liveliness of his imagination can be held in no degree accountable.

(8) In 1810, in order to become a member of the University of Oxford, after ceasing to be a Christian, he subscribed the Thirty-nine Articles, and solemnly declared himself a believer in Christianity.

(9) In 1810 and 1811, during his residence at Oxford, Shelley was a wholesale fabricator of mendacious letters; the letters being written under false pretences of motive and mental temper to the persons whom he lured, or tried to lure, into religious controversy, some of the epistles being signed with a false name, and dated from a false address, and one of them at least representing the writer of it to be a young woman troubled with religious doubts. For the countless falsehoods of these letters, written thus deceptively for purposes of concealment and security, the force and liveliness of the writer's imagination cannot be held accountable. It is not to be supposed that whilst writing to the Bishop of the Church of England in a feminine style and under a feminine signature, Shelley imagined he was a woman.

(10) In 1811, whilst still at Oxford, Shelley produced *The Necessity of Atheism*, with a preface made up of untruths, for which the force of his imagination cannot be held in any degree accountable.

(11) In 1811, after leaving Oxford, Shelley, from complaisance or in mere levity, took the sacrament with Miss Westbrook when he deemed Christianity a delusion, regarded the sacred rite as a piece of mummary, and was (according to his statement to Southey at Keswick) busying himself in making proselytes to Atheism in the Clapham boarding-school, where Harriett Westbrook was a pupil. Participation in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper being an act of solemn declaration that the participator is a believer in Christianity and in communion with the Church, I think few readers will question that in thus taking the sacrament Shelley was guilty of an act of untruth.

(12) In October, 1811, he wrote words for the purpose of inducing people to imagine that, instead of having left Harriett with Hogg at York, he had taken her with him to London and Sussex.

(13) In a letter dated to Mr. Medwin, the Elder, on 26th November, 1811, there is evidence, under Shelley's own hand, that shortly before that date, he wrote to his mother and sisters respecting some 'affair' which, on coming to the ears of some of his old neighbours at Horsham, was regarded by them as no true affair, but a thing of his invention.

(14) During his stay at Keswick (1811-12), Shelley (speaking, as I conceive, under delusion) told Southey that Hogg had attempted to seduce Harriett during the journey back from Scotland to York. That, in thus speaking of his familiar friend to a slight acquaintance, he spoke under misconception, we have Shelley's assurance in eloquent words and still more impressive acts. Should additional evidence ever show that Hogg really made the attempt, and that Shelley had good grounds for what he said and wrote on that matter to his friend's infamy, he must be adjudged to have written and acted deceitfully or under egregious misconception, in respect to what he did and wrote in later times for Hogg's exculpation.

(15) In 1812 Shelley wrote William Godwin a series of letters teeming with inaccuracies, some of which were slanderous statements respecting his father.

(16) In the same year, towards the close of his stay at

Greta Bank, Shelley imagined himself to have been assaulted by a robber under the very eaves of Mr. Calvert's house; an hallucination productive of statements contrary to fact.

(17) In the same year (1812), whilst at Tanyrallt, Shelley undertook to write a long and 'wheedling letter' to the Duke of Norfolk in order to induce His Grace to take measures for his pecuniary advantage. Neither laudanum nor imaginative-ness can be held accountable for this declaration of a resolve to write a deceptive letter.

(18) The year 1813 was the year of the Tanyrallt Mystery; an affair fruitful of inaccuracies of statement, some of which must be ascribed to untruthfulness on Shelley's part, though some of them may have been altogether due to delusion.

(19) In the same year (1813), he produced *Queen Mab* with a false imprint.

(20) In the same year (1813), he for several weeks laboured under the notion that he was suffering from leprosy; a delusion conclusively evidential of transient mental derangement.

(21) In 1814 he produced a further demonstration of *The Necessity of Atheism*, under the deceptive title of *A Refutation of Deism*, and with a Preface made up of untruths. It has been questioned whether this work was ever published in the commercial sense of the term. It is, however, certain that the work was written for circulation, and that it was legally published.

(22) In the same year (1814) he wooed and won Mary Godwin under cover of deceitful practices, on one occasion allaying William Godwin's suspicions and apprehensions with an explanation, which, as it appeared a sufficient explanation to the anxious father, must have been disingenuous and deceitful. Moreover, we have Mary Godwin Shelley's evidence that in wooing her he told her the wild fiction about his father's purpose to shut him up in a lunatic asylum, and of his preservation from such imprisonment through Dr. Lind's timely intervention.

(23) In or about 1815 Shelley told Peacock that his sentence of expulsion from Oxford had been preceded by his formal arraignment before a numerous assembly on a charge of producing an atheistical work, and that he had defended himself with a formal oration delivered to this numerous assembly. At the same time he showed Peacock a report of this oration in what had the appearance of being a newspaper.

(24) In or about the same year (1815) Shelley, in conver-

sation with Peacock, gave the inaccurate account of the offence that resulted in his dismissal from Eton, saying that he was sent from the school for pinning a boy's hand to a table with a penknife.

(25) In the year (1816), shortly before he started from England for Switzerland, with Claire and Mary Godwin, he poured upon Peacock a stream of misstatements (referable either to falsehood, delusion, or both) respecting Mr. (Tremadoc) Williams's alleged visit to Bishopgate and sojourn in London, and the purpose of his father and uncle to lock him up in a lunatic asylum, alleging that his object in going abroad was to get beyond the reach of his father and uncle, who were set on depriving him of his liberty.

(26) In 1817 Shelley instructed the Olliers to tell the complicated untruth under cover of which they could withdraw from the position of principal publishers of *Laon and Cythna*, and put Messrs. Sherwood, Neely, and Jones in their place.

(27) In 1818, on coming to Venice, Shelley, for a sufficient object, told Byron that Mrs. Shelley was staying at Padua, though he was at the time well aware she was at Bagni di Lucca with her children.

(28) In the winter of 1818-19 (if reliance may be placed on his statements made to Byron and Medwin at Pisa in 1821-2) he imagined himself the recipient of singular attentions from a married lady of beauty, wealth, and noble connections, who, after proffering him her heart in 1816, and following him in that year from England to Switzerland, followed him, in 1818, from England to Naples, at which place, according to his story, she expired in the winter of 1818-19, under his sympathetic observation.

(29) In 1820, Shelley told Medwin that, in the summer of the same year, he had been felled to the ground in the Post Office of Pisa by a man who precluded the ruffianly blow by exclaiming, 'What, are you that d——d atheist, Shelley?' that, on recovering from the stunning effect of the blow, he hastened to tell Mr. Tighe of the assault; and that, after tracking the ruffian to the Tre Donzelle at Pisa, he and Mr. Tighe went to Genoa in futile pursuit of the assailant. Whether, in the summer of 1820, Shelley really imagined himself a sufferer from this imaginary assault, whether he went to Genoa in

pursuit of the imaginary assailant, whether he ever spoke to Mr. Tighe about the assault, are matters respecting which there is no sufficient testimony; but the evidence is sufficient that he told Medwin about this assault that was never made upon him. Shelley's statement about this affair must be referred to falsehood, delusion, or semi-delusion.

(30) In 1821-2 Shelley spoke to Byron and Medwin of the enamoured gentlewoman who, according to his account, followed him, in 1816, from England to Geneva, and, in 1818, from England to Naples; the whole of his narrative of the lady, who worshipped him and died of love for him, being a fiction, referable to falsehood, delusion, or semi-delusion.

(31) In the same year (1821) Shelley wrote from Ravenna to his wife the letter, crammed and crowded with misrepresentations of what had passed in conversation between him and Byron, respecting the scandalous account of his (Shelley's) intercourse with Claire.

To the careful reader of these volumes it is, of course, apparent that this schedule of significant matters might be greatly extended and expanded. But the list is sufficiently comprehensive to justify the verdict that, from his boyhood to his death, Shelley was apt to utter for truth things contrary to fact; that he sometimes did things which no precisely honest man could do; that his word was not a word to be relied on. To account for his frequent departures from truth, friendly historians of his career have declared him, in respect to his misstatements, not so much an untruthful man as a deluded man. Following in the track of these historians, every reader of this book is left to decide for himself, in respect to each of the poet's numerous misstatements, whether its inaccuracy should be referred to purely deceptive purpose, sheer misconception, or semi-delusion. In reviewing the many deviations from truth, it is, however, well for readers to bear in mind that delusion is one of three distinctive forms of insanity. To be insane is to suffer from a state of mental disease, attended with incoherence, fatuity, or delusion. The mind that suffers from any one of these kinds of disorder is a deranged and insane mind. However eccentric, or feeble, or otherwise unhealthy, it may be, the mind which displays no one of these three symptoms of derangement is a sane mind. Hallucination differs in magnitude, intensity, and persistence. If Shelley was wholly under

hallucination in respect to his father's purpose of confining him in a madhouse, and if he was (as Peacock says) haunted by this notion throughout life, he was the victim of an extremely revolting and very persistent delusion. There is a certain amount of truth in another poet's dictum, that great wits to madness sure are near allied. But if Shelley's alert and subtle mind was so steadily, and for so long a period, held by the notion that his father wished to put him in a madhouse, he was mad in a degree, that to many readers may well appear incompatible with the vigour and grandeur of his faculties. In the estimate of his mental and moral peculiarities to minimize the degree in which he suffered from hallucination, is to maximize the degree in which he was untruthful. In proportion as the final verdict shall acquit him of untruthfulness it must declare him to have suffered from insanity. If he was not contemptibly untruthful, he was (for all his mental force and poetic sensibility) pitiably insane,—far more insane than I can think it possible for a man of his mental power to be. In reviewing his long series of misstatements, careful psychologists must come to the conclusion that when uttering them he was either wilfully untruthful, suffering from delusion, or suffering from what Peacock termed 'semi-delusion'—the state of mind in which untruthfulness and morbid imaginativeness joined hands.

But whether they proceeded from hallucination or deceptive purpose, or from the co-operation of falsehood with ungovernable fancy, the misstatements had the effect of wilful untruths; and the utterer was a speaker of words not to be relied on. To be kept steadily in mind by the students of Shelley's story, this fact is to be held especially in view at moments, when the student is considering the evidential value of statements uttered by the poet to the discredit of individuals.

Apart from grounds of which I refrain from speaking fully, there are grounds for believing that Shelley accounted for his rupture with Harriett Westbrook by representations which, had he been constituted like ordinary English gentlemen, would at least be *prima facie* evidence that he had other and stronger reasons for withdrawing from her than any reasons he gave to Peacock. It is not probable that he would have succeeded in withdrawing Mary Godwin from her father's care, had he not made her believe he had graver causes for dissatisfaction with the 'noble animal,' than her inability to feel poetry and under-

stand philosophy. Reared as she had been within the lines of religious orthodoxy, and trained to reverence marriage, it is scarcely conceivable that Mary Godwin fled with her lover to the Continent, without having been made to believe that her friend, Harriett Shelley, had by flagrant misconduct forfeited her title to her husband's consideration. Though Field Place has not shown much discretion in its treatment of Shelleyan questions, it would scarcely have smiled at Peacock for not being in Shelley's confidence on the subject, had it not been really possessed by the notion, that it knew more than the rest of the world about the poet's real cause of displeasure with Harriett. Without having a strange story in reserve for the fulfilment of the promise, Field Place would scarcely have promised to produce in due season a statement, certain to change greatly the world's misguided view of the poet's treatment of his first wife. I have small doubt that Southey quite misconstrued the words to which he referred, when in his scathing August-1820 letter to Shelley, he wrote:—

'You might have regulated your domestic arrangements, as you say, quite as conveniently to yourself, if you had descended to the base thoughts of the vulgar. I suppose this means that you might have annulled your marriage as having been contracted during your minority.'—(*Southey's Correspondence with Caroline Bowles*, 1881.)

Southey's conjecture was wide of the mark. Shelley knew too much of the Scotch marriage law to imagine he could have set aside his marriage on that ground. What he meant to imply must have been, that if he could have descended to the base practice of vulgar folk, wishing for divorce, and rich enough to pay for it in the usual way, he could have obtained a legal separation from his wife, on account of her misconduct. And that he ventured to hint so much to his disdainful correspondent is a sufficiently clear sign that he felt he really had a story (true or fanciful) which, had he condescended to divulge it, would have made Southey open his eyes with astonishment at the sufficiency of the grounds on which the author of *Queen Mab* retired from John Westbrook's daughter. It may therefore be assumed, or at least imagined, that sooner or later the world will be told in a new way, *why* Shelley left the girl who had tried his temper not a little for some months. Possibly the story will be that the author of the anti-matrimonial note to *Queen Mab* caught poor Harriett in the act of lavishing on

some man of mean condition attentions she should have rendered to no one but her husband.

At this date, when poor Harriett's friends have passed from the scene, it may appear to Shelley's idolaters alike easy to get credit for such a tale, and difficult to discredit it. But critical persons will be less readily satisfied of the truth of any such story than the Shelleyan enthusiasts imagine. To offer such a tale to critical persons on Shelley's bare and unsupported assertion will be bootless. They will be sure to say, 'What more natural than for the man, who (under delusion) slandered his father and Hogg, to put (under delusion) monstrous things on record against his wife, after quarrelling with her?' At the moment of breaking with his wife, Shelley was very anxious for Peacock's approval of his action;—so anxious for it as to call him up to London from the country for a conference on the business. Moreover (though Mr. Froude, out of his great knowledge of Shelleyan questions, says the reverse), Shelley all through life was quick to defend himself at the expense of other people. The critical people will say: 'Why, if this story is true, and not a Shelleyan invention, did not Shelley confide it to Peacock? One can see why the poet (capable of giving two different accounts of the same affair to the well-informed Duke of Norfolk and the uninformed William Godwin) would withhold an untrue story from the well-informed Peacock. But why, if the story were true, did he keep it from Peacock? It can scarcely be suggested that he shrunk from lowering Harriett in Peacock's esteem.'

At the time of the Chancery Suit, Shelley did his utmost to regain the custody of his children. He knew that, if the decree should be given against him, the decision would be grounded on considerations of his conduct to his first wife. Harriett was no longer in the world to suffer from any evidence to her discredit. The other Westbrooks were so hateful to him, he would gladly have caused them pain by evidence to her discredit. To prove he had left Harriett for a good and sufficient cause, would have been to strengthen his case greatly. Yet he did not venture to embody the facts in an affidavit for the Chancellor's consideration. Moreover, Field Place bears witness that he never confided the real cause of his withdrawal from Harriett to any of the few men, who were his familiar friends in 1814. Surely the critical people will ask, 'Why did

he not confide this story to his familiar male friends in 1814? Why did he not venture to produce this story in the Court of Chancery, and swear to its truth in 1817?' Surely, also, the critical people will answer both these questions in ways, adverse to the credibility of the story. Should it appear that he told the story to Mary shortly before she yielded to his suit, the critical people will say with a significant smile: 'No doubt; and also to move her to regard him compassionately, he at the same time told her how his cruel father would have locked him up in a madhouse, had it not been for the virtuous Dr. Lind's intervention.' It will be asked by critical readers why the statement, which if true should have been given to the world long since, has been withheld so long? Why it was not put forth during the life of Thomas Love Peacock (Harriett's vindicator, Shelley's close friend and executor), who, knowing both Shelley and his first wife intimately, maintained stoutly to the last that she was a virtuous and loyal wife? These questions will also be answered in ways unfavourable to the statement.

Given to the world on Shelley's bare assertion, any such statement will have little effect on critical readers. Nor will it be more effectual on judicial minds for being supported by statements by Mrs. Shelley and other persons, deriving their information from Shelley. Fifty such statements will be nothing more than Shelley's own statement, uttered by his lips through fifty tubes. A statement, having no evidential value on its first utterance, does not acquire evidential value from mere reiteration. Nor will it be of any avail for any biographer, drawing his information from Field Place, to produce the mere substance of any such remarkable statement, and require critical readers to accept the facts on the bare authority of Shelley's representatives. Field Place has been too often misled by its authentic evidences to wildly erroneous conclusions respecting Shelley, for critical readers to be in a humour to accept any more of its quite sincere statements of fact without distrust.

Field Place has been induced by its evidences to think the poet a man of aristocratic descent, though his lineal ancestors, from Elizabethan to Georgian time, were at best small landowners, entitled to bear arms.

Field Place has been induced by Clint's composition to think of the poet's face as symmetrically beautiful, and having

a straight and delicately-modelled nose; though he really had unsymmetrical features, and a little turn-up nose.

Field Place has been led by its authentic evidences to ascribe the poet's estrangement from his family wholly to the religious and political differences that at most only embittered the quarrel, which is shown by Sir Bysshe Shelley's will and codicil, and the certain facts of the poet's story, to have resulted from causes, having no connexion with questions of religion and politics.

Field Place is under the impression that Mary and Claire were not related in any way whatever to one another.

Though Mary Godwin was not educated, any more than Amelia Opie or Jane Austen, to be a Free Lover, Field Place is under the impression that she was educated to think lightly of the matrimonial rite.

Though Mary Godwin did not give herself to Shelley without enduring a strong conflict of passion and duty, Field Place is under the impression that she suffered from no such conflict.

Though the Lord Chancellor's decree was given in steady consideration of Shelley's conduct to his first wife, Field Place is under the impression that in delivering the decree, which denied to Shelley the custody of his children by Harriett Westbrook, the Lord Chancellor had no regard to the poet's conduct to his first wife.

Holding in its hands the conclusive evidence of Shelley's great affection for Claire in 1816 and 1817, Field Place is under the impression that Shelley regarded her with disapproval and aversion in those years.

Surely, critical students of Shelley's story have in these facts sufficient grounds for declining to put implicit confidence in the biographical discretion and exactitude of Field Place:—sufficient reasons for saying 'as Field Place is under so many erroneous impressions respecting the story of its poet, is it not more than probable that Field Place is under an erroneous impression respecting his reasons for leaving his first wife?'

I do not doubt that Field Place could give us some painful and hitherto undivulged particulars about the poor girl, whom Shelley certainly illuminated out of Christianity when she was still a child, and who, according to Shelley's words (spoken soon after their marriage, to Southey, at Keswick), was expelled from her Clapham boarding-school for embracing the opinions, which

he offered to her and her schoolfellows. But what good would come to Shelley's reputation by the display of any more details of his victim's eventual debasement? Southey's words were no less true and just, than scorching, when he wrote (see *Robert Southey's Correspondence with Caroline Bowles*, 1881) in his August-1820 letter to Shelley at Pisa: 'Be this as it may, ask your own heart, whether you have not been the whole, sole, and direct cause of her destruction. You corrupted her opinions; you robbed her of her moral and religious principles; you debauched her mind. But for you and your lessons, she might have gone through the world innocently and happily.' As he read these scathing words, Shelley may well have dismissed all hope of good to come to his posthumous fame from the vindictory story, which, even yet, may be published to his injury. Shelley *was* accountable for Harriett Westbrook's depravation. To exhibit for the first time any peculiarly revolting feature of that depravation might cause men of honour and sensibility to realize more vividly than before the consequences of Shelley's action towards the unhappy girl; but to do so could not take a feather's weight from the heavy burden of his accountability for the ruin to which he brought her. To point to any incident of that depravation as something to justify Shelley in 'leaving her to slide' into deeper guilt, would be an extravagance of injustice to the poor girl.

Powerless to palliate at any point his misdeeds to Harriett, the story, which might, perhaps, account more precisely for his withdrawal from her, could neither justify, nor tend by a single hair's-breadth to justify, Shelley's action towards Mary Godwin and her father. No injury, done to a man by A, can justify him in doing B a grievous injury. Yet, to hear some of the Shelleyan apologists talk, one would imagine that, to show Harriett did her husband a greater wrong than any she has hitherto been proved to have done him, would be to clear him of all blameworthiness for dealing his familiar friend the most cruel blow, that can be given to a loving father. As no demonstration of her badness would lessen his responsibility for her depravation, or in any degree justify his way of dealing with his intimate friend's sixteen-years-old daughter, it is to be hoped that the world will not be invited by any biographer to consider the story by which Shelley thought he could open Southey's eyes.

The efforts that have been made during the last twenty-five years to prove Shelley an almost sacred social regenerator, should be considered in connexion with the literature that has created sympathy and admiration for the few noteworthy Englishwomen who have, in recent generations, lived connubially with men to whom they were not married:—the literature (of countless essays and articles) that has celebrated the virtues of Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Godwin, and, not content with rating Marian Evans at her high proper worth, as the literary equal of Dickens, Thackeray, and the late Lord Lytton, has dealt with her admirable novels, as though they were a kind of new sacred scripture.

Of those novels I think far too highly to write aught in their disparagement. On other than purely literary grounds, I also think too worshipfully of Marian Evans (let her *nom de plume* be dropt as a thing that has served its turn) to wish to take aught from the homage that is her due. It is proverbially difficult to foretell the degree of esteem in which a greatly powerful and popular writer will be held by future generations. But in Marian Evans's case there is neither difficulty nor fear in predicting her place throughout all time in the history of English literature. She may be surpassed by women of future time. But, come what may, she never can be anything less than by far the first and greatest of the Victorian Englishwomen of Letters. It was my hope that the splendour of her literary fame would be spared the honours of biographical celebration; that the interest of her unique literary personality should pass down to posterity under her universally familiar *nom de plume*; and that her strictly personal and private story might be lost sight of as far as possible.

Two of my reasons for this hope outweighed all the others. So long as her association with George Henry Lewes should not be brought before the world in clear and permanent record, it would remain a thing of her privacy, a matter of which there would be no need for tongue or pen to say a word, an affair in respect to which good taste and good feeling would dispose every person to be reticent. But on being offered in clear type to the whole world's consideration, on being laid on every library table and every drawing-room table of the country, for approval or disapproval, ceasing to be an affair on which one might be silent, it would become an affair on which every

educated person of all the English-speaking peoples would be bound, *i.e.* constrained by domestic and other social duties, to form an opinion of approval or disapproval, and to declare it. To give publicity to the circumstances of that association, would be to raise for discussion in every family of the English-speaking peoples, the many perilous questions touching the origin, history, uses, and usefulness of lawful marriage;—to raise the whole group of dangerous domestic questions, which Shelley would fain have forced upon universal consideration by the anti-matrimonial doctrine of *Queen Mab* and *Laon and Cythna*. I was not thinking only of Marian Evans's fame, and of the many hard things that would necessarily be said of her in controversies about these social questions, when I hoped that her domestic association with George Henry Lewes would be withheld as long as possible from general knowledge. The story has now been told, to the gratification of the enemies of marriage. I do not blame Mr. Cross for revealing what he may well have deemed himself powerless to keep from universal consideration for any long time. He had, I am sure, the best motives for doing what I hoped he would not do; and it cannot be questioned that, after deciding to give the world a complete biography of the famous woman, with whose story he is so honourably associated, he selected the least objectionable way of accomplishing his purpose.

It needs not many words to show how little the extreme Shelleyan Socialists are justified in pointing to that story, as evidence that Marian Evans concurred in their desire for the substitution of lawless for lawful wedlock. Still a struggling woman of letters, she was living in the circles of Free Thought, when she came to think of marriage in some such way as the pious Martin Bucer thought of it in the sixteenth century, as the devout Milton thought of it in the seventeenth century, as the honest and temperate William Godwin thought of it before his abandonment of Free Contract views. It was an error of judgment (arising partly from defective knowledge of the dangerous forces of human nature, and partly from the co-operation of the egotism and the modesty, which prevented her from seeing how greatly she differed in her mental and moral faculties from other people); but it was certainly in no degree due to any lack of delicacy or moral sensibility, that she conceived all spouses capable of living as virtuously and loyally in

Free Contract as she knew herself to be. It was under these circumstances that, whilst regarding certain social questions in some such way as they are regarded by 'the flower' of the Free Contract party (men abundantly endowed with learning and mental acuteness, with benevolence and moral rectitude), it devolved upon her to decide, whether she could live righteously in the closest and tenderest intimacy with a man, who had won her heart, without being able to make her his wife.

It is not easy to recall how much she sacrificed of dignity and happiness by her decision, and at the same time to think patiently of the man, for whose sake she made such an enormous sacrifice. Had the lot that came to her in her autumnal age, only befallen her at the perfection of her powers, her life might have been no less fruitful of happiness to herself, than it was beneficent to her species. To think that such a lot might have befallen her, could have scarcely failed to befall her, had she answered the fatal question in another way, is to feel resentfully against the man who, at the instigation of mere masculine selfishness, attached himself to her, and in doing so bemuddled her existence, and shut her out from so many of life's sweetest joys. Had he acted the part of a gentleman in the matter, she would, at the dawn of her celebrity, have married happily, for she was a woman to inspire love. It is more generally known that she wanted some of the elements of feminine beauty, than that she was in some respects personally charming. Together with the brow of mental power, she had eyes memorably eloquent of genius and sympathy, and a smile that, startling or rather gently surprising the beholder (seeing it for the first time), changed all the character of the countenance, which it brightened into momentary beauty. It is not for printed words to tell, how this ineffably charming smile changed and beautified the face, that, in its expressionless moments, was unattractive. Fortunate in the abundance of her fine rich tresses, she was also fortunate in her musical voice. It was the music of a gentle and lofty nature; for which alone many a man would have loved her.

Enough has been said to indicate how Marian Evans came to hold the views respecting marriage, which made it possible for the woman of lofty nature and fine moral sensibility to consent to Mr. Lewes's suit. Compassion for him may be held largely accountable for her consent and self-sacrifice. Though he was the cause of his own domestic misfortunes, he was to be

commiserated for them. And, in nine cases out of every ten, when a fine-natured woman does what she ought not to do, she takes the wrong step in obedience to a generous impulse. Hence she took the step which she lived to regret profoundly (no careful reader of her novels can question *that*), without, however, surviving her affection for him during his life. Possibly, when she was being drawn into his power, she did not trouble herself to think much of the possible effects of her example. If she thought seriously of that matter, she, thinking as she then did of marriage, may well have concluded that the effects of her example would not be pernicious, since the Free Contract in which she could live virtuously appeared to her an estate, in which the rest of her sex might also live righteously. But the reasons are obvious, why the still comparatively obscure woman of letters may have thought the social influence of her example—the act of a single and comparatively unknown person, hidden from general observation in vast London—was too light a matter for serious consideration. The case was far otherwise a few years later; when in the exercise of her art she had enlarged her knowledge of human nature, had pondered more thoughtfully the several social problems connected with marriage, had realized the evils certain to ensue from the substitution of the Free Contract for lawful wedlock, and had won for herself a place and eminence, necessarily attended, in the case of so conscientious a woman, with a lively and anxious desire to use her influence for good ends, and no other ends. When vast power comes to such a woman, it never fails to create in her a lively, a keen, even at times a torturing, sense of responsibility.

Is it strange that Marian Evans was often sad? that the knowledge of her power over men and women was more fruitful of sorrow than of delight to her? I may be wrong in thinking, but I like to think, that one of the motives, which determined her to accept the love of the man, to whom she gave her hand after Mr. Lewes's death, was that she might, by the celebration of her marriage, do her best to preserve her name and fame and the story of her former life from being used to discredit an institution and a rite she venerated. Anyhow her marriage was an act, by which she publicly and impressively declared her disapproval of the great purpose of the enemies of marriage, and denied their right to speak of her as one of themselves. The act was thus interpreted by those innovators, who at the

time of the marriage spoke with no little warmth of her miserable abandonment of their cause and principles. And the deed was not misconstrued. She could not have proclaimed more effectually her deliberate opinion that the ordinances of marriage are salutary and sacred, and that it is the duty of women to comply with them. Instead of making for the end desired by the extreme Shelleyan Socialists, the story of the great novelist's life sets forth nothing more clearly than that she regarded the main condition of her association with Mr. Lewes, regretfully.

Is there any reason to fear that the extreme Shelleyan Socialists will ever see the accomplishment of their desire? None. It is more probable for Shelley's poetry to be forgotten, than for his social views to be acted upon. The churches of the land are strong enough to guard marriage against its enemies. If the churches were as powerless as fortunately they are powerful for its preservation, the domestic conservatism of the English people—a sentiment no less strong in the homes of English liberals than the homes of their political opponents—could by itself safeguard lawful wedlock from destruction. The women of England are not so unintelligent and powerless, that they are likely to be wheedled by specious phrases out of the dignity and privileges secured to them by matrimony.

There is small reason to fear that the Free Contract of the Shelleyan innovators will be established on the ruins of an institution, rooted in the affections of the people, and hallowed by the practice of centuries. The notion that an institution so venerable and salutary, and all but universally honoured, may perish, because three or four English women of letters in the course of a century have consented to live in Free Contract with lawless spouses, and because a handful of philosophers and half-a-hundred journalists think it would be well to endow every man with the power of changing his wife at pleasure, is a notion, too ridiculous for serious consideration.

But though they are foredoomed to failure, the Shelleyan Socialists have done and are doing no little harm to individuals. People, who delight in literature, without knowing how little its producers differ from the followers of other vocations, are apt to overrate egregiously the wisdom and virtue of the individuals, to whose writings they are most largely indebted for mental refreshment and edification. To a veteran, whose way of

life has afforded him good opportunities for observing the lives and studying the characters of the producers of the higher literature, it may well seem droll that the author of good books should be so generally and confidently assumed to live no less well than he writes. But the disposition of readers to think too highly of their favourite writers should not be overlooked by those who would take a perfect view of the various forces, that, resulting in social opinion, determine the conduct of individuals. Influential in all sorts and conditions of general readers, this disposition is especially influential amongst the sympathetic, the imaginative, and the inexperienced. By the many young men and women of our rural homes—indeed of all homes, lying well away from the literary coteries—who, drawing their liveliest contentment, take their clearest views of life, from current *belles lettres*, the works of supremely powerful poets and novelists are not more prized as sources of diversion, than as sources of intellectual enlightenment and moral guidance; and their delight in the literature they admire, is usually attended with a dangerous readiness to regard with approval whatever they may know of the personal conduct of its producers.

On a considerable proportion of these young readers, what must be the effect of the strenuous and fascinating literature which, now in separate books, now in the pages of popular magazines, and now in the columns of powerful journals, instructs them, that, whilst living in Free Contract, Mary Wollstonecraft and Gilbert Imlay were living innocently in the eyes of God and man; that Mary Godwin should be commended for her generous courage in flying from her father's roof with another woman's husband; that Marian Evans acted justifiably in associating herself conjugally with a man who could not marry her; that it is as honourable for a woman to mate in Free Contract as to become a wife; that reverence for lawful and holy matrimony should be rated as a mediæval superstition; that Shelley was only in the smallest degree to blame for carrying off his intimate friend's sixteen-years-old daughter.

Can it be questioned that the literature which teaches all this must at least tend in many cases to weaken, and in some cases to overpower utterly, the principles and considerations, which in certain seasons of temptation, withhold young men and women from the shortest and quickest road to shame and depravation? Can it be doubted that this elegant and hurtful

literature is at this moment causing many a young Englishwoman to be saying to herself, as she hesitates at the entrance to this common highway to ruin, 'Why can it be wrong for me to do what Mary Wollstonecraft is defended for doing ninety years since; what Mary Godwin is commended for doing in an early time of the present century; what the wise and lofty-natured Marian Evans did only a generation since? If it was not wrong for Marian Evans, and Mary Godwin, and Mary Wollstonecraft to live connubially with men to whom they were not married, it surely cannot be wrong for me to do likewise?'

Can it be doubted that, through the influence of the same elegant and hurtful literature, many a young Englishman is now saying to himself, 'As Shelley was guilty of nothing very heinous, nothing more reprehensible than "the sin of acting on emotional theories of liberty," in carrying off his familiar friend's daughter, when he had no prospect of ever being able to marry her; as he, notwithstanding this emotional indiscretion, is offered to our reverential admiration as a man who, might under auspicious circumstances "have been the Saviour of the World," it cannot be very wrong for me to take to my arms in free promise a girl whom I have a fair prospect of being able to marry a few years hence, and whom I mean to marry as soon as it shall be convenient for me to do so?'

Had Field Place merely garnished the poet's pedigree, and varnished his portraits, and dressed the main incidents of his career into a pretty memoir, I should have been silent about the genealogical record and personal narrative, and held my peace about the falsity of the pictures. But Field Place has exceeded its reasonable powers and privileges, in dealing with the story of a remarkable man, whose fame is less the property of his nearest kindred than of the nation, to whose literature his genius gave new lustre. Had the Shelleyan Enthusiasts confined their eulogies to the excellences of their favourite poet's achievements in his proper art, I should have concurred cordially in their admiration of his poetical services, and been content to smile in my sleeve at their simplicity, in thinking he spoke like a peer, when he was only speaking like a peasant. But it is not enough for the Enthusiasts, that Shelley's incomparably fine poetry should be valued at its full worth. To satisfy them, we must declare him no less virtuous as a man,

than masterly as a songster. And whilst Field Place and the Enthusiasts have committed indiscretions, that provoke remonstrance and demand correction, the extreme Shelleyan Socialists have placed his strongest title to social homage, on his courageous avowal of sentiments, that are unutterably distasteful to the great majority of conscientious and right-minded people.

When a man is taken from the long roll of our mighty poets, and offered to the world's admiration as a rare example of all the human virtues, it is well for people to examine the grounds of such extraordinary commendation. Now that *Queen Mab*, with its anti-matrimonial note, is put into the hands of our boys; now that *Laon and Cythna*, with its monstrous doctrine, is seen on our drawing-room tables; now that the author of so reprehensible a book is proclaimed a being of unqualified goodness, who, under auspicious circumstances, 'might have been the Saviour of the World,' it is time for the world to be told, that the recent efforts to win for Shelley a kind of regard, to which he is in no degree whatever entitled, are only part of a social movement, that, so far as the extreme Shelleyan Socialists are concerned, is a movement for the Abolition of Marriage,—in accordance with the spirit and purpose of his Social Philosophy.

THE END.

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